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Management quality in the organizational culture of the Nicaraguan Higher Education Institutions. Towards the instauration of a quality culture at the UNAN-Managua

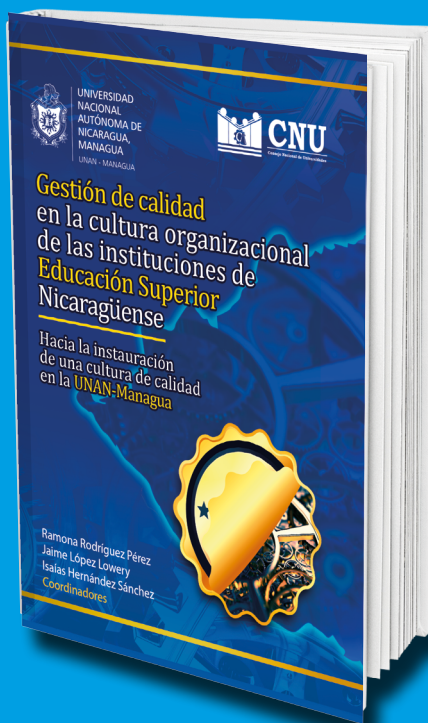


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The book “Management quality in the organizational culture of the Nicaraguan Higher Education Institutions. Towards the instauration of a quality culture at the UNAN-Managua”, coordinated by Ramona Rodríguez Pérez, Jaime López Lowery and Isaías Hernández Sánchez, welcomes all readers to delve into the ineluctable web of controversies and challenges relative to quality control and its university level contextualization, well-seasoned, this time, by the particular expression from the topic on higher education in Nicaragua. As the analysis and presentations of experiences around the topic become more exhaustive, emerge the need to take new challenges and generate knowledge about bases each time more solid and scientific, tending to the continuous betterment of quality on Higher Education Institutions (Instituciones de Educación Superior, IES) in Latin Americans and Caribbeans. Quality as concept has been

widely handled by many authors since the 60's and 70's on the past century, with emphasis on the 80's and priority on the 90's; overall, in the last reunions and conferences of international organisms dedicated to higher education.

When conversing about “quality”, it includes systems, processes, material and methodological resources, decision making, dialogue, and negotiation between internal and external actors, leadership, teamwork, information, and others. Shortly, quality is associated with the dynamic of surroundings and, the identity and development of each IES, implying it must also be managed adequately to achieve results and expected impacts.

In the quest of giving practical sense to these routes, the book is supported by a thorough analysis and valuation, all tightly intertwined with the development of quality and its management on Higher Education Institutions in Nicaragua and, specifically, at UNAN-Managua.

On the initial pages it is evident the importance is granted to the unyielding connection between strategic administration and quality control in higher education. Mainly, the first section of the book bonds us to the comprehension of the real administration systems to the quality are those located at the center of attention to futuristic Mission and Vision of its development, from which emerge and guided the main challenges and obstacles of quality in university institutions.

Nevertheless, the relation between the philosophy and quality administration has not always been recognized, because

they have overlapped under a few analysis edges and remote spaces of converging quality projection of an IES based on institutional demands and environment.

This work embraces a clear viewpoint of an IES aiming for quality as it considers it a basic pillar for its development, institutional strategy, in which quality and continuous improvement is promoted. The strategy is contentious, between other components, of the Mission, a more precise and clearer image of the future projection of what is intended to be attained, the objectives and goals contain key elements to guide the improvement of quality and, generally, institutional development. These must be considered as an input to formulate quality patterns and/or elaborate improvement plans.

The book stresses the value of working effectively seeking the promotion of quality culture in the university community, as, if not prioritized, little seeds and roots will find actions are made to generate quality; risk of fracturing the growth spiral in search of steady growth, leading to irregular and atomized actions breaking the “must be” of university life. The above steers us to ponder on the crucial need of consistently working on beliefs, mutual values, attitudes, and individual and collective behaviors of those who integrate each area inside IES. The resistance of changes and use of the powerful information tools must

be acknowledged to enhance and merge results, and desired result.

Moreover, special treatment is granted to quality concept as a key element of steady rise in the development of organizations in general. Its notion has different approaches given the application scope, and has evolved according to historical, social, and economic contexts. Since the sixties, quality mediation was only related to the business environment as production control and supervision. However, through the help of various authors, classical quality theories and principles have worked as foundation for its application in real consolidated contexts. Approaches differ from satisfaction with clients' needs, to reach excellency through the absence of deficiencies. This leads to tie subjective elements and producer and consumer's objectives.

Scientific literature marks complexity to assume a distinct quality concept, considered as a polysemic element. Thus, meaning multiplicity requires observing and understanding diverse conceptual slopes with the aim of synthesizing this construct's definition, resulting in carefully handled in the reference book. Thus, it is determined a consensus about the concept of quality in the university field does not exist. Most convenient results, then, conceive it from its polymathic and relative essence, and based on it, embody, implement and activate it. What is certain is quality in an IES is associated to the improvement, institutional capacity to address demands externally and internally, insofar as to responsibly fulfill its social mission. It is an intricate idea in higher education which links the processes with results and effects in society's demands.

The continuous development of the concept of quality and its execution through the different standards, variables, indicators, or others must generate a culture valued and legitimized by its members as useful for the university administration processes are not minimized to isolated events and procedures, rather convert it into daily practice, adequately suitable by IES's actors and, first, by its directives.

Proper treatment of the topic in the book leads to also accentuating it is not possible to think in quality without featuring the value of its administration. Galarza (2015) considers:

Quality management has a greater reach than inspections or control as mere validation of results completed by IES, since, notably, it promotes the enhancement and steady improvement of university activities; it must be integrated into the system of institutional management, demonstrating coherence to university processes and guiding role. To manage quality, it is required, among other factors, leadership directives and engage the proactive participation of the university community, with insights to contribute to the satisfaction of its users and their needs. Regarding the rising complexity and integrality, it is essential to design university policies guided to develop the quality, which must be properly executed and assessed every so often, to realize and inspect the cohesion of results and effects inferred from its activities.

The book's authors conceive quality management as an institutional compromise, which execution addresses a set of activities neatly arranged, pursuing the efficiency of its processes, functions, and services, to position and render account before society, control organism, and international standards, as quality reference entities.

As stated above, in the document titled "Quality and relevance of the programs of higher education", acted as a cornerstone in the III World Higher Education Conference debates celebrated in Barcelona, España (2022):

As any type of evolution, the definition of quality in higher education evolves and adopts different forms as it goes from one stage to another on its own development. As concept, sufficiency to the purpose has a definite role in supporting systems, institutions and higher education programs to improve structurally and take advantage of the systems' capacity to self-reflect and boost the foundation of the identified deficiencies. However, current approaches of insurance of higher education's quality, are largely focused on inputs and processes, do not answer to expectations every time greater held about higher education.

The above leads to clarify quality and need to manage it as an element built in a perennial manner, it acquires new nuances and approaches in light of the institutional and contextual demands, revealing its historic-concrete, social, and culturally determined character.

Within the second section of the book, topic's contextualization of quality acquires special hues, in the frame of its direct application to the context at UNAN-Managua, stressing the link with information systems, self-evaluation, internal oversight, and risk management.

According to the above, the Action Plan CRESS 2018-2028 establishes as goal: "promoting the availability of updated and pertinent information about efficiency of the formative processes in the region". It recognizes information as an essential resource in search of quality continuous improvement in IES. Afterward its established as strategy "Harmonizing statistical databases and other information systems of higher education as inputs for the elaboration of diagnostics and studies to add to the formulation of institutional and public policies, national and regional".

In IES, information exceeds its fixed role of being a data set to become a key strategic resource. Therefore, it is not merely compiling data, but identifying, processing, and using the crucial information to achieve long-term goals. The distinction and emphasis of the information becomes a core foundation for efficient management and decision-making in higher education.

In this scenario, it becomes clear the urgent need of conceiving information systems enabling IES's quality, which proactively contributes to answer higher education's challenges. Similarly, in post-modernity, quality management in higher education acquires new challenges and meanings, which, certainly, confers the digital age we transit, powered by

the Information and Communication Technology (ITCs) and imprint of university 4.0, that ought to be adjusted to our conditions, without losing sight to constitute an inescapable imperative.

Another element addressed in the work is connected to processes of institutional self-evaluation executed in the institution under a collaborative approach, self-critical and critical, transparent, democratic, and reflexive, generating changes and is guided to improvement. In this regard, there are diverse methodological routes, structured in assorted or interrelated phases, satisfying certain demands through its results. It is required to have internal and external information to be properly planned, organized, executed, and controlled.

Through this process, it has been possible to know the progress levels university has towards the achievement of quality standards, broadening its capacity to regulate itself based on a monitoring and control, having its own installation and resources, through which seeks to answer to current and future society and the institution's demands.

Within this section, relevant analysis surrounding politics, norms, plans, proceedings, registers, and organized methods are also carried out, as part of the Internal Control System (SCI), which comprises an essential tool for IES. It is employed to execute a systematic diagnosis of the progress and susceptible areas of improvement, guided to the compliance of each instance from the institution's objective. The adoption of SCI has been key to the institutional

culture promotion in sync with processes of self-evaluation oriented to constant improvement corresponding with the Mission, Vision, and Strategic Goals.

Another interesting edge discussed is related to the need to assist risks that might alter the strategy's formulation, its application, and control, transforming it into an IES's imprint, and for UNAN-Managua. It is worth noting, amid the high surrounding's dynamism and vulnerability universities are under, the value of risk management and its contribution in the improvement of strategic management's quality is reinforced. To address risks, identifying them is lacking, it also requires anticipating and preventing them, enforcing actions to identify and value them adequately, prioritize them and be faced with a contingency plan, properly applied and controlled.

In the third and last section of the book, the Human Talent Management System implemented in recent at UNAN-Managua is emphasized, characterized by its systemic, integral, and humanistic approach, which benefit not just the recruitment staff with the need to enhance scientific-technical preparation, stimulating innovation and generation of creative answers to underlying problems.

In this matter, careful attention to proactive and transformative leadership must be prioritized at IES is underlined, to attenuate the resistance to changes, mobilize efforts, and achieve greater effectiveness in each of the processes developed. Thus, UNAN-Managua promotes a quality culture centered on people and their needs, corresponding with demands and functions performed

in the country. The management of human talent is a university policy of deep meaning prone to the enhancement of quality and institutional development.

helps to the development of quality management, not just institutionally, but also projected and has a greater impact on Nicaragua's higher education.

It also implies the way cohesion and rescue of values between members of the university community have constituted a key element to reinforce the nation's resilience. The timely debate, reflexive critic, purposeful and consensus search have assisted to regain trust and stability, which made possible the coexistence and harmony to defend citizens' rights to live and coexist in peace.

Likewise, the university community has taken the unwavering commitment of constantly renew itself and work in function of quality's continuous improvement, united to its future Mission and Vision, influencing the directives' decision-making process and systemic evaluation of institutional performance.

Lastly, I occupy the space to thank the opportunity of not solely relishing this book's reading, but also serve as a motivation bridge for other people, delve into its pages and discover the accurate messages it offers about diverse topics related to quality management in IES.

To my judgement, his work's main contribution is it strengthens theoretical-methodological construct around university quality management and, alongside, the subject being an unfinished product, it endeavors us towards new analysis perspectives and the realization of other studies and investigations in this field.

We congratulate the UNAN-Managua for this initiative which, without a doubt,