

EDITORIAL

QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*“Quality is not a specific destination, it is a journey,
a rising idea towards its ideal state,
a possible utopia, and yet unreachable”*

Father Alfonso Borrero

Education takes a central place in the discourse about economic development in the communities. It is a fundamental requirement to establish the social-economical conditions that bridge the gaps of inequality, and therefore, it bets on the individual and collective welfare in society. In this sense, the quality assurance processes, as they guarantee, control, and promote the correct performance of the Higher Education Institutions (IES), become a valuable instrument to make education a true development engine.

In order to guarantee the accomplishment of such an important goal, the Ministry of National Education (MNE) regulates the execution of the Higher Education policies through the direction of various organizations: the CESU (National Council of Higher Education), CONACES (National Commission for the Quality Assurance of the Higher Education), CNA (National Council for Accreditation) and ICFES (Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education), it also coordinates the Quality Assurance System in Higher Education, which consists of “a group of actions developed by the different actors in education, who promote, manage and permanently improve the quality of the institutions and programs of higher education and its impact on the training of the students”. Such system is composed of three subsystems, which are connected to each other: the evaluation, the information and the promotion subsystems.

The IES are evaluated in two different stages, one is mandatory, the one of its creation, and the other one is voluntary with the institutional accreditation or of higher quality. For its creation, they have to prove the fulfillment of the requisites in the Decree 1478 in 1994, for private institutions, and in the act 30 in 1992, articles 58-60, for the public institutions. In regards to the academic programs, they have to be in compliance with the 15 quality conditions established by the Decree 1295 in 2010 from the moment of their creation. This is an essential requisite they need to meet in order to be granted the official registration for a 7-year period, which renewal is subjected to a similar verification and follow up process. Without the official registration, they cannot offer an academic program.

The National Education System has announced that the IES that wish to reach higher quality standards can apply for the institutional accreditation. With that purpose the National System of Accreditation (SNA) has been created, it is defined by the article 53 of the Act 30 in 1992 as the “group of policies, strategies, processes and organizations whose main target is to make sure that

SABER, CIENCIA Y Libertad

the higher education institutions, which belong to the system, comply with the highest standards of quality in their purposes and goals”.

To be accredited is to receive the testimony of the State about the quality of a program or an institution, based on a previous process of evaluation where the institutions, the academic communities, and the National Commission of Accreditation (CNA). In this sense, the accreditation contributes significantly with raising of the levels of the university programs as it foresees improvement plans that demand permanent self-assessment. It becomes then an important starting point to consolidate the university autonomy by guaranteeing the fulfillment of the mission and social impact of the IES.

Universidad Libre is part of a selected group of schools in Colombia that have desired to visualize its quality processes before the domestic and international community, requesting before the CNA the institutional accreditation. This is why we are confident that the work made by each one of the departments located in strategic points in the country, will receive public acknowledgement through an accreditation award.

Finally, we must remember that each one of the indicators of quality is the main factor of the research understood from two angles: the actual research and the formative research. There is no doubt that the journals are a valuable evidence of our hard work and the findings of our researchers, those who are part of our institutions and those who talk to us from different parts of the world. Saber, Ciencia y Libertad journal is a means of dissemination of articles that show the result of the hard work made in each area, in our case, in the Social Science.

In the present issue, the works of authors such as Mario Echeverria Acuña, Andrés Gonzalez Serrano, Pedro Javier Barrera, and Ruby Stella Jaramillo give the journal a high intellectual standard. They develop up to date arguments in the legal field. We also broach important perspectives in the area of Social Responsibility, with topics such as environmental auditing in public management and in the design of a management system in social entrepreneurial liability for small hotels in Cartagena. Also, the wide range of topics broadens from the pedagogical and sociological fields of education, to matters related to enterprise and society.

ZILATH ROMERO GONZÁLEZ
Editor