INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

THE CULTURE OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION IN PERSPECTIVE OF UNIVERSITY MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

This piece of research addresses a problem about the culture of educational innovation. The advance of research aims to recognize the values that academic managers associate with educational innovation. The method of study is qualitative. There were 25 academic managers including the management team and academic coordinators of bachelor's degree in a particular institution. The technique used was the interview and the instrument was a semi-structured guide which includes five analytical categories: conceptions, areas, factors, roles and dimensions of innovation. The results presented herein matched the 19 coordinators who were interviewed in the first phase of the study. Data from the 19 coordinators are presented in relation to the control variables and subsequently, at the descriptive level, there are the results obtained in the category of conceptions of educational innovation. The study provides information on the challenges to educational innovation and gives evidence of the diversity of conceptions of innovation, supports the idea to undertake efforts for a common framework that legitimizes the intentions and processes of educational innovation. The results provide elements to proceed with a route to relaunch innovation in the context of the study, promote greater and better spaces and moments for its development and generate conditions for its dissemination, in other words, to encourage culture of and for innovation.

KEYWORDS

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LA CULTURA DE LA INNOVACIÓN EDUCATIVA EN PERSPECTIVA DE LOS GESTORES UNIVERSITARIOS

RESUMEN

La investigación aborda una problemática sobre la cultura de la innovación educativa. El avance de la investigación tiene el objetivo de reconocer los valores que los gestores académicos asocian a la innovación educativa. El método del estudio es cualitativo. Participaron 25 gestores académicos que incluyen equipo directivo y coordinadores académicos de licenciatura en una institución particular. La técnica utilizada fue la entrevista y el instrumento una guía semi-estructurada que incluye cinco categorías analíticas: Concepciones, ámbitos, factores, roles y dimensiones de la innovación. Los resultados que se presentan corresponden a los 19 coordinadores que fueron entrevistados en la primera fase del estudio. Se presentan los datos de los 19 coordinadores con relación a las variables de control y posteriormente a nivel descriptivo se presentan los resultados obtenidos en la categoría concepciones de la innovación educativa. El estudio aporta información sobre los desafíos para la innovación educativa y da evidencia de la diversidad de concepciones sobre innovación, apoya la idea de emprender esfuerzos para un marco común que legitime las intenciones y procesos de innovación educativa. Los resultados brindan elementos para continuar con un itinerario para relanzar la innovación en el contexto del estudio, promover mayores y mejores espacios y momentos para su desarrollo y generar condiciones para la difusión, es decir favorecer la cultura de y para la innovación.

PALABRASCLAVE

Innovación educativa – Cultura – Valores - Gestión universitaria

1. INTRODUCTION

In the field of university education, educational innovation has become relevant, it broadly understood as a set of processes involving intentional break with routine practices and changes in beliefs, assumptions or theories underlying practices and ways of thinking about education, They are aimed at solving problems or improving education (Macchiarola, 2012)

In the university context, educational innovation is recognized as a possibility to add something new to reality in order to transform it, as well as a priority to achieve educational goals, a proof of this is the many academic- and research-related meetings related to educational innovation, as well as the structural areas and / or functional groups in educational institutions that direct their being and doing to the tasks of innovating educational processes.

Despite advances in innovation as a field of study, lack of sufficiently developed theory is recognized, so heterogeneous and dispersed constructions persist over time. (Black and Messina, cited by Cabra-Torres, 2013). It is thus that the term innovation often lacks rigor and precision and sometimes uses different names such as: change, improvement, renewal and reform, in an interchangeable way with the term innovation or, where appropriate, a reductionism is presented and limited it to technological innovation in education or continuous improvement from the corporate approach.

Commonly, innovation is understood from two perspectives. In the technological field, the term innovation is often associated with the production of a new object or device, without its necessarily being reduced to this; while in the cultural sphere, it is predominantly linked to the idea of a change in attitudes, behaviors, procedures, and how to make courses of action.

The main role of innovation in the educational scenario is associated with the changes occurring in the social and educational environment; besides, it is one of the fundamental pillars to enhance the quality of education (Olazkoaga, Marum, Rosario and Perez, 2013) and is indissolubly linked to research.

In this scenario characterized by new technological bases, new realities and new knowledge generated from disciplinary integration, university education poses several challenges to socioeducational growth, competitiveness and educational practice based on rethinking the university, answering basic questions on its social function and how to balance and harmonize the demands of knowledge with social relevance, which undoubtedly poses challenges as regards educational innovation.

With regard to the conceptual framework of the study, it is assumed that educational innovation is intentionally decided and conducted with the purpose that the added change should be an improvement in the area of the educational institution, in its structures and processes to achieve its educational goals.

In this sense, we agree with the definition which states that "innovation is an idea, object, or practice perceived as new by an individual or individuals trying, which tries to introduce improvements in relation to desired objectives, which by nature has a foundation and is planned and deliberated" (Nichols quoted by Tójar, 1997: 11).

Educational innovation is a change, which is mediated by three conditions: it must be conscious and desired, it is the product of a process and does not substantially modify the educational practice (Medina Rodriguez & Gonzalez, 2009)-

Innovation is associated with improvement and, in this sense, returning to Escudero (2006), we can identify improvements on teaching and learning, which represent innovation according to its components, or improvement on organization, covering global issues of the institution, such as school climate, culture, structure and process among others.

The term innovation in the university sphere acquires professional nuances and connotations depending on the cultural, scientific, technical or professional context that is used, in part, hence the need to study educational innovation and particularly the

values on which it is based, implying to engage in the analysis of culture of and for innovation in the context in which it develops. In this sense, culture is essential to build knowledge about educational innovation, besides being, together with those policies promoting it, necessary for innovation to come true in educational practices.

Addressing the study of educational innovation and particularly the culture of and for innovation entails engaging in the analysis of the values, references and contexts from which to recover the sense given to the actors that are involved, encourage and / or promote the task of innovating

If culture means the set of meanings and values that determine the specific way in which one lives (Lonergan, 1988), we can be clearly understand the relevance of this concept in the construction of knowledge on educational innovation and the real possibility of promoting innovation processes that are likely to prevail in time and are not threatened by personal or structural changes in a school organization.

Because culture is the deepest dimension of innovation, the dimension in which the meanings and values that underpin the way the educational process is lived in everyday life are renewed, so an innovation that fails to transform these meanings and values tends to remain in formal or structural renovations that may succumb to the force of the prevailing educational culture.

Within this notion of culture can be the relevance of the values underlying the conception of what to educate means and the theoretical and methodological perspective from which the concrete forms of implementing this concept are based.

Thus, rationality in innovative processes is not only technical vision of means and ends. The consequences of an educational innovation in time cannot be expected, and even be unfavorable, so it is preferable to emphasize the values rather than assuming that innovations have favorable and positive consequences.

A value is what is intended to be reached in questions for human deliberation (Lonergan, 1988, p. 40) and the questions raised for discussion are the questions that are geared towards finding those worthwhile elements or dimensions, that build, that contribute to improvement in personal and social life.

The values are the foundation on which the rationality of educational processes is built and they are of fundamental importance because, as some authors like Kolvenbach (1990), Cortina (2006) and Lonergan (1988) affirm, they are apprehended not only in what is cognitive but also and especially in what is affective and from this emotional cognition Vertin (1995) they manifest themselves in the form in which subjects act and decide.

Innovative actions in education are always guided by values, education moral good is the development of human capabilities, social learning, humanization of educational relations in this sense, they are not guided by interests of an economic, technological or business nature.

With regard to values, it should be noted that, given the recurrence of the term in education and the vagueness of its definition, it is necessary to clarify the meaning and sense attributed to it in this study. When referring to values in innovation, it is assumed

that it is the qualities of innovation, what does good for innovation and, as a result, that educational innovation takes place is estimated and wanted.

In addition to the concept of value of Lonergan stated above and in accordance with it, according to the definition of values which are "any real or ideal quality of things, desirable or required for its kindness, which has the power needed to guide human life towards it. Values have a real foundation in the goodness of things, but they only appear as valuable to a subjectivity that is capable of discovering that quality "(Garcia, 2009: 115).

Therefore, for this piece of research, innovation values imply an objective and subjective dimension, since innovation is a value as it is a valuable, good and positive quality in education and that becomes a value related to a person who evaluates.

As for the types of educational innovation, the typological integration proposed by Rivas (2010) is assumed. It is a multidimensional typology whose dimensions are: system components, innovation intensity, the way that change and the spread of innovation occur. The aforesaid type provides criteria for analysis to categorize the concepts of innovation and it is valuable as a framework for understanding the values in educational innovation.

Finally, the interpretive framework is provided by the theory of action (Rivas, 2010) that places educational innovation dichotomously, distinguishing between innovations that affect the aims and objectives of education and innovations concerning the means to achieve results. The theory of action provides educational innovation, as a social practice, with dimensions for its analysis and understanding and they include: social actors, intent, actions, consequences, scope and context (Engelken, quoted by Cabra-Torres, 2013)

University education is imperative. The need to develop innovative practices in university education and meet the demands of educational innovation emanating largely on national education policies and institutional strategies to promote quality education highlight the need to study from the particular contexts the conditions and factors that favor, limit or hinder educational innovation.

In the spirit of generating processes of continuous improvement on the quality and depth of innovations, the analysis to recognize potential areas of innovation is important: plans and curricula, educational process, use of information and communication technologies, alternative methods for learning and educational management (Corvala, Tardif and Montero, 2013), which are those areas where we need to encourage innovation through processes of training and professionalization, or, better conditions and resources for development of educational innovations, which assume that managers recognize that that they are potential areas for innovation.

In this regard, the analysis of the conceptions of innovation that are responsible for educational management represents a noun referent to know a dimension of reality in which educational innovation processes are specified.

The aforementioned problem leads to the problem of research on the culture of educational innovation from the perspective of academic managers in a university

context and the reported progress has to do with the particular question of research: What are the values that are recognized in conceptions of educational innovation from the perspective of managers?

Regarding the relevance of the study, the importance of providing knowledge regarding conceptions of educational innovation by managers as key actors in its revitalization stands out. The study results represent a diagnosis from objective and subjective dimensions of educational innovation, which recognizes what there is, what is aspired and what is needed, so that it is an input into the complex dynamic of educational innovation within a horizon of values.

In this sense, the knowledge generated by research provides a valuable contribution to a common conceptual framework and innovation, helping to create conditions for a culture of innovation characterized by continuous improvement in processes and educational practices.

2. OBJECTIVES

Build knowledge about the culture of innovation from the perspective of university managers.

Identify conceptions related to educational innovation of those responsible for university management.

Recognize the values that academic managers relate to educational innovation.

3. METHODOLOGY

The method corresponds to the qualitative approach, it is interpretative and the scope of the study is descriptive, the results are the basis for a second phase of correlational-scope research in which teachers are engaged. It is a nomothetic study that recovers the particularities of the participants in the study.

The population consists of 12 members of the leadership network and 37 academic coordinators of several academic degree programs in a particular institution. The study sample was formed by 25 participants, six are part of the leadership network and 19 are academic coordinators of several academic degree programs.

The results presented correspond to those obtained from interviews with 19 coordinators of academic programs, who represent 51% of coordinators and 76% of the 25 participants in the study.

The technique used for data collection was the interview, which was conducted by appointment agreed with each of the participants in the study.

The instrument was a semi-structured guide that aimed to make an approach making it possible to analyze, from the referents of the academic coordinators, their view about innovation in university education to reflect on strategies for change and improvement.

The guide was developed around five analytical categories: Conceptions, areas, factors,

roles and dimensions of innovation. The number of open questions in the guide was nine.

The category of conceptions, of which results are reported, includes the following questions: How do you see innovation in the process of university education?, in what educational practices do you think innovation should be encouraged?, and in what aspects of the environment and organizational culture do you think there are areas of opportunity for innovation in university education?

The procedure for conducting interviews involved a written request to the coordinators of the interview for a 30-minute appointment to make the interview. Authorization was requested to record the audio. The interview was transcribed. The information was integrated into an Excel file from which the first reiteration analyses were performed.

The breakthrough presented corresponds to the results of the category on conceptions of educational innovation. For the second phase of analysis, there is the software Atlas ti to set the codes, family and other components of the hermeneutic unit to proceed to the interpretative analysis.

4. RESULTS

The results presented correspond to those obtained during interviews with coordinators of academic programs in the initial phase of the study. In the first instance, the data of the 19 coordinators regarding the control variables are presented: gender and department.

Subsequently, there are the descriptive results in the question of the category of educational innovation conceptions and it is contrasted with the multidimensional typology. The progress of analysis of results that is presented is at the descriptive level and it was made based on the criterion of repetition.

Out of the 19 interviewed coordinators, 42% are women and 58% are men. With regard to the areas of knowledge of the programs they coordinate, 16% are coordinators of programs in the area of engineering (Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Chemical Engineering), 21% correspond to the area of social sciences (Law, Movies and audiovisual production, Communication and Economics), 16% belong to the area of humanities and arts (architecture, graphic and digital design and advertising design and production), 21% to the administrative economic area (Business Administration, Accounting and senior management, Management of institutions and international trade), 16% to health sciences (Nursing, Dentistry and Medicine) and 10% were in the area of biological sciences (Environmental Engineering and Engineering in agronomy)

The progress of the analysis of results regarding the conceptions of the coordinators allows us to recognize that, in defining educational innovation, they focus only on one of the dimensions analyzed from the approach of Rivas (2010), which in this case is the size of the components of innovation, without reference to other dimensions such as innovation intensity, the way of innovation and its extension.

As for the size of the components of innovation, 47% recognized that the components of innovation are many, 42% mentioned a critical component of innovation and 11% did not identify any component in the conception expressed on educational innovation. Regarding the components recognized in a particular way in innovation, the method and contents stand out.

From the context of the theory of action, the conceptions of the coordinators on educational innovation can be analyzed in two directions, which affect the aims and objectives of innovations and innovations concerning the means to achieve objectives, including teaching aids and those included in or derived from the proposed curriculum. In the first case, 21% of conceptions of the coordinators emphasize that innovations serve intentionality, 42% expressed conceptions of innovation focused on the media with an emphasis on information and communication technologies, 26% expressed conceptions where Innovation is considered related to both the goals and the means to achieve it, and 11% did not refer to any of the options of interpretation.

Out of the values expressed in the concepts of innovation, there are 18 mentioned distinct values, out of which 7 totaled 21 repetitions and the other 11 only got a mention. Depending on the number of iterations, the expressed values were: first the value of the improvement with 7 mentions, second the exchange value with 4 reiterations and then, with 2 mentions, the following values: training, effectiveness, continuous improvement, foresight and adaptation.

The 11 values that obtained only one mention were the following: renewal, truth, transformation, efficiency, vanguard, entrepreneurism, search, resolution, relevance, creativity and updating.

With regard to the question of in what educational practices do you think innovation should be encouraged, the results indicate that the educational practices in which the need for innovation is recognized correspond to the size of components, in which 100% of respondents agree to explain the need for innovation.

Out of the 31 mentions that were made on the components to be innovated, 31% are mentions referring to the teaching methodology, pointing out strategies and teaching techniques; 13% mentioned innovation in the roles of teacher and student; 10% said innovation in securities, like 10% that made reference to practices favoring the connection between systems; 6% of mentions point to the need to innovate in the educational-goals-related practices, 6% mention structure and relationships, 6% refer to forms of socialization, and 6% to facilities for teaching and learning, such as laboratories; while 3% of mentions refer to the need for innovation in policy and project, and 3% to groups of students.

Out of all the mentions referred to educational practices in which the need to promote educational innovation is recognized, only 3% referred to the intensity of change, and 3% to higher amplitude of innovation. Neither the dimension related to the embodiment nor educational innovation in multidimensional perspective was explicit in the answers.

On the question on aspects related to the environment and organizational culture in which it is considered that there are areas of opportunity for innovation in university

education, participants made 63 mentions that are included in the dimensions: components of innovation, modes of realization and breadth of innovation.

Mentions concentrate on aspects related to environment and culture related to the dimension of components, 14% considered innovation in the values prevailing in the environment and in the institutional culture as an area of opportunity, promoting consistent action; 13% referred to the connection between systems through actions of internal and external links; 11% referred to structure and interpersonal relationships, 10% refer to procedures both in education and in the academic and administrative areas; 8% mentioned both institutional and educational objectives; 8% pointed out the forms, spaces and encouragement of socialization, 8% of mentions coincided in innovating in roles promoting collaborative work and interdisciplinary groups, and 2% in terms of educational project.

In the dimension ways of realization of innovation, 8% of mentions refer the opportunity for innovation through redirecting actions toward institutional values, and 4% mentioned it through restructuring.

In relation to the dimension of the extent of innovations, 4% of mentions noted that, in terms of environment and culture, innovations should be group-based, and 10% reported that the amplitude should have a corporate scope.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the results shown on the context in which the study was developed, there is a contribution in the construction of knowledge about the culture of innovation from the perspective of university managers in which challenges to educational innovation are identified, mainly in promoting more and better space and time for the development of educational innovation to achieve educational goals with appropriate means within the framework of a process of continuous improvement.

This implies an impact on the professional development of teachers, their training and professionalization (Corvala, Tardif and Montero, 2013), since particularly as educational practice is concerned, the participants highlighted the need for innovation in components of the educational process where the participation of teachers through their teaching is essential.

Similarly, the development of pilot projects and the establishment of collaborative systems to potentiate the development of educational innovation, in order to promote the environment and culture of innovation and redirect the values guiding innovative processes beyond results.

This will be favored to the extent that innovation is placed at the level of the basic functions of the university (teaching, research and extension) and progress is made on the definition of indicators to measure educational innovation, but above all in the experience of values supporting the construction of rationality of innovative educational processes (Cortina, 2006; Kolvenbach, 1990 and Lonergan1988).

Regarding the objective of recognizing the values that academic managers relate to educational innovation, knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of innovation and process are considered to represent a favorable condition to identify, expand and share the framework to assess educational innovation, a substantive element for culture and innovation.

Regarding the stated objective of identifying the conceptions about educational innovation of those responsible for university management, given the diversity of views on innovation of the participants in the study, we considered it relevant to make efforts to promote a common language that legitimizes the intentions and processes to educational innovations.

This first approach, we also recognized a limited vision of innovation that does not address its multidimensional nature (Rivas 2010) and it focuses on traditional views of education and emphasizes the field of technology and secondly the educational process, leaving aside other key areas for educational innovation.

Have coordinators make progress in understanding the characteristics of innovation, such as the conflict about its necessity, clarity and complexity of its objectives, quality feasibility of the proposed change, as well as the characteristics of the process, which involves: training teachers and continuous support, leadership and experience in innovation by teachers and managers, commitment and support of managers, clarity of process implementation, monitoring and problem solving, support of the community in relation to innovation will certainly make it possible to minimize the impact of factors affecting the implementation of educational innovation.

Additionally, to continue with an itinerary in the line of educational innovation will require further analysis of the theory of innovation in education, promote more and better space and time for development and create conditions for the spread of educational innovations to make proposals for improvement, on the road to socialization, legitimacy and dynamism of innovation.

A road to which this analysis that represents an approach to the culture of educational innovation from the perspective of managers contributes to, which will be deepened by the interpretation of other categories, as well as the information provided by the members of the leadership network .

For now, the reflections derived from the preliminary results are provided as an input to rethinking educational innovation in university education and as a contribution to the dialogue in the educational community facing the challenge of innovating in training people.

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