



**“The university should focus on the effective teaching of students, on working with them as they are, it must stop complaining about students and how ill-prepared they are”**

Universities need to work in a framework of social responsibility, it means that the teacher must put himself in the place of the student and understand the effects of his teaching. The teacher should prepare himself pedagogically to share with the students the learning process.

By Carla Estrada Jopia

*What are the main challenges that faces the university of the 21st century?*

First, universities need to work in a framework of social responsibility - that is not the same as social sensitivity. Social responsibility includes social sensitivity, but it has to do with the responsibility for actions and how those actions affect the other actors. In that sense society looks for certain values at the university, such as equity and the promotion of certain levels of development.

On the other hand it should be clear, as we agreed in Chile, that the products of university are public goods regardless of whether they are delivered by the state or the private sector, and as such are valued by society.

In Chile we have to move to a higher level of education to build a society with advanced human capital. We have taken the first leap. From what I understand, here in Vietnam they have not been given this first opportunity - which is the largest tertiary education. In Chile we have between 40% and 42% of young people (18 to 24 years) studying at tertiary level; in contrast there are countries that have 80% as Finland, Cuba and Norway. We are proposing that by 2014 we aim to reach 50% coverage; we are close.

Chile is already aware of the need to professionalize, to generate offers that meet the skills required. We should promote education not simply to pass subjects, but to grow in capacity - particularly those capacities which have not been developed in high school.

Those that were trained thirty or forty years ago, after fifteen years as a professional, were taught to analyse, to conceptualise, to improve the theory we had; but that has been through our training after college. That's what the university has to deliver today, has to change in this regard. In Chile we already have coverage, but we have no capacity to deliver the skills needed; I think Vietnam has not even been given the initial jump in coverage.

What matters is that we must improve the quality - but not the quality that has always been known, as having teach-

ers of recognised reputation, or more books - but the quality of the learning, so that teachers are not required to do so much research for fame. Because now that we have access to lots of internet research, what you have to do is build a quality of learning. Furthermore, we must create a body of professionals with advanced knowledge and they must develop academic master's degrees and doctorates and do research. In that in Chile we are lagging behind because only state universities do so.

*What should be the values of this university?*

All values are entwined within the context of social responsibility. The teacher must also put himself in the place of the student and understand the effects of his teaching. If one undertakes a commitment to all stakeholders, we must satisfy all those involved in the process. We must practice social responsibility and social sensitivity - and that has to do with how we respond to the social problems of society.

The university should focus on the effective teaching of students, on working with them as they are, it must stop complaining about students and how ill-prepared they are as I as a teacher prepare myself pedagogically to share with them the learning process. In addition, it must encourage young people to tend to prefer disciplines that will be useful, and the authority in Chile has much to develop in order to create mechanisms to guide students in careers that best serve the country and themselves.

Finally, the technology gives us a challenge; the university is making progress in their structures, although we are stagnant, because we are full of faculties.

*Does this mean a change in the structure of the university?*

Yes, it must have a simpler structure. The university has not progressed in the same way that other organisations have advanced, especially in connection with information technology and communications. Today, organisations are simplified: now instead of having meetings, assemblies and enclosures, everything can be done by chat or web sites – it can be simplified greatly. For example, universities are doing the “choice of classes” automatically through the web. We see that all the progress the companies have implemented have not permeated the university. That still remains stagnant.

Now, we must also advance in education. In Monterrey students have their the cellphone or iPod, and while riding in a bus can see the class teacher. In the third year they do not even have to go to the classroom. We are still stuck in the lecture-hall and we have to understand that there is a major leap possible in the ways in which we do things.

Moreover, the university must establish who is addressed; to whom I work, who are my teachers, what will be my segments.

I cannot claim to be from the best research university in the country and I cannot claim to do research in all areas, I have to look for my own spaces, and the Universidad del Mar does not seek to work only with the intellectual elite.

*What is the niche of the Universidad del Mar?*

Considering that we have jumped from 40% to 50% coverage, we have to ask where all these students have come from: mathematically we have no choice but to work with students who have less than 550 on the University Selection Test. Then, we have to adapt to those students who may not have great knowledge, or have not been able to think, to

heighten their cognitive functions. We are open to students who are usually rejected because it is believed that they are not useful. We have shown that it is possible to do a good job with them, to achieve.

*Should we change the subjects taught in the university?*

We have covered almost all areas, although some are more developed than others. But often the demands of students do not have to do with the needs of society; the students want to study law, business engineering, but not agriculture or renewable energies - they do not know what these areas are about.

When the student is aspiring to study at the most prestigious universities, they just want to go to that institution – and certainly if they get into an unknown profession they will do it anyway. But in the case of universities such as ours, the students are able to go for what they really want, because the university is not attractive by itself. That's why we cannot yet deliver a range of courses all as interesting and varied as they could be; students have no interest.

Given that we are forming partnerships with municipalities to allow them to deliver a 20% scholarship quota, we aim to deliver another 20% but on the condition of studying in certain areas. Thus we are on track to develop certain topics, such as renewable energy or water energy, for example.

*What can Vietnam learn from the experiences of other countries, such as Chile?*

As basic data, based on our experience, the first lesson is to increase the coverage of tertiary education. Then, the university has to think about who will run, if we create a teaching university or a university as an engine of the society change, the development of thought, and of research. A country needs many types of universities, it is good that there is a variety. Furthermore, we must use information technology, and that means that our students and teachers should be accustomed to it.

I do not know a lot of about the reality of life in Vietnam; how socialist Vietnam is, for example. But what we have succeeded in Chile, even when people do not appreciate it, is that we have eliminated free education. In 1998, the First World Conference in Education arose and it was widely thought that free education is inequitable because ultimately only the economic elite benefited from it. It is an apparent contradiction that in fact was right. With a non-free university, finally competition is settled and prices are very similar - with some exceptions. The difference is made up by State aid and it is through these mechanisms, such as demand subsidies, that we can attain a good development of the university. But I'm not sure if this can be done in Vietnam, because it requires a specific political environment.

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