

ΣΟΦΙΑ—SOPHIA

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18634/sophiaj.15v.1i.902>

Higher education and solidarity economy towards a territorial approach

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Article information:

Received: November 8, 2017
Revised: June 14, 2018
Accepted: December 15,
2018

How to cite:

Cifuentes, L.E. (2019) Identidades, creencias y valores de jóvenes rurales en contextos escolares urbanos. *Sophia*, 15 (1) : 16-30.



ISSN (electronic): 2346-0806 ISSN (print): 1794-8932

Abstract

The evident crisis in the social, economic and environmental dimensions has called for the definition of strategies from universities, governments and civil society organizations, including those of the social and solidarity economy, to create conditions that will lead to an improvement in the quality of life and sustainable development. This article presents the progress in the development of the proposal of education in and for the solidarity economy at the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, which has a competence-based approach aimed at activating citizenship, knowing and making visible the solidarity economy and promoting entrepreneurship and social innovation with impacts on the internal and external community. The accompaniment and monitoring of this process, guided by the action-research methodology, reveals good practices, opportunities for improvement and great challenges, especially with regard to the territories where the university has its field of action. To continue advancing in the strengthening of this strategy is especially relevant due to the recent signing of the peace agreement between the FARC-EP guerrillas and the national government of Colombia, which invites a greater citizen and institutional commitment to the construction of territories of solidarity for peace.

Keywords: Higher education, competencies, active citizenship, social and solidarity economy, territories.

Introduction

In the face of the civilizational crisis, the development agendas in general, and in particular those of education and the social and solidarity economy (SSE)¹, agree that it is necessary to direct and integrate efforts to promote a type of education that contributes to the activation of a citizenship that commits and empowers individuals and communities with the contribution of innovative and sustainable solutions to such complex problems as poverty, environmental sustainability, inequity and social exclusion. At the same time, it is reiterated that coordinated action between public and private actors and social organizations contributes to the achievement of sustainable development objectives in its environmental, economic and social dimensions (UN, 2014). Education is considered as the axis of the processes of transformation and social change and in this measure it could be affirmed: "The future of society goes through solidarity and the future of solidarity goes through education" (Fajardo, 2012:219)

In turn, solidarity economy organizations, either autonomously or in coordination with local governments and other support institutions, demonstrate effective practices to address the crisis and positive impacts on the quality of life of those who practice it and their communities. The SSE contributes to the emergence of new models of development as it changes people's thinking and actions, allowing for the advancement of a culture of sustainability. This, in addition to the achievement of links with other social movements supported by the academic environment, has an impact on the assertive response to citizens' needs and demands through the work of local, national and international solidarity networks, united in the purpose of working for a more equitable world for present and future generations (GSEF, 2016; Stiglitz, 2016; Azkarraga Etxegibel & Altuna, 2012; Bretos Fernández & Morandeira Arca, 2016).

This dynamic begins to have points of convergence with other processes, when it is observed that from higher education the consolidation of a paradigm of thought and action, referred to the need and commitment to implement strategic actions of service to society, is gradually opening up.

Thus, a more pragmatic trend is emerging in universities towards the training of professionals who exercise active citizenship in the search for answers and solutions to environmental problems, producing and disseminating relevant knowledge in terms of economic, social and environmental development (Gibbons, 1998; Vallaeys, De la Cruz & Sasia, 2009).

Pedagogical models that contribute to the formation of competencies favour the articulation between the academy and the demands of society for the solution of its problems, through the production and transfer of knowledge and technology (Didriksson, 2016). Academic structures are formulating new intellectual, disciplinary and professional boundaries; there is an emergence of national and international collaboration and cooperation networks linking universities, organizations and governments in the search for innovative and relevant responses for the achievement of individual and collective well-being. It is also recommended that a greater territorial balance be promoted in the distribution of tertiary institutions in order to foster local development, in which the link with local governments and the productive sector plays a fundamental role, in order to increase the relevance of this type of education (OECD, 2016).

This article presents the results that, through the action research method, give an account of the process of implementing a proposal for education in solidarity economy at the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia. The process begins in 2013 with the redesign of the curricula of the solidarity economy courses, within the framework of the current curricular reform being carried out at the university, which proposes an educational model that favors the development of competencies, understood as the ability to use knowledge, abilities, attitudes and values related to each other, to facilitate flexible, effective and meaningful performance in an activity or task in context, seeking to be always in favor of the well-being of the whole community (UCC, 2013, p.69).

Three courses were created for the institutional area in the curriculum of all careers, equivalent to six credits. The first one, called Solidarity and Development, promotes the activation of the citizen being; the second one, Solidarity Economy has emphasis in knowing the model and making it visible; the third one, referred to the Solidarity Entrepreneurship, oriented to make proposals to create or strengthen expressions of the solidarity economy in context. The courses are offered

1. The expression "social and solidarity economy" integrates related concepts through which the reality, theory and social project of organizations, networks and enterprises that base their economic practices on associativity, mutual aid and solidarity are expressed in different parts of the world. This article will alternate the use of social or solidarity economy according to the country where the experience is developed

to the majority of students in the virtual mode, but, in some of the 18 venues that the university has throughout the country, they are also developed in a face-to-face way.

In the Institutional Project, education in solidarity economy contributes to the generic competencies that favour integral formation, collective life and the exercise of citizenship, with a focus on university social responsibility. In this sense, the reference framework is extended from the initial unit of analysis of the courses to the curriculum in general, as a system in which the links and integration with other academic areas and the missionary functions of research and social projection are evident and necessary, with an evident impact also on the institutional management model.

In the first section, research has been carried out in several countries that links the social solidarity economy with higher education, providing elements of analysis, approaches and horizons for improvement. In the second, the methodology is described, the participants are characterized and the different cycles covered where the gradual linkage and change of roles in the actors of the process can be appreciated. In the third one, the results are presented in terms of changes and new challenges regarding the didactics of solidarity economy in the university, the community of professors and the alignment with the institutional project. Finally, the conclusions are presented, specifying the lessons learned and the first elements for the next cycle of action research, with the opportunity to link new actors to favour the process of educational innovation in the territory.

The research of this educational experience is interesting because of the real and potential impacts it generates, since the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia has about 50,000 students from different disciplines who take courses on solidarity economy and 7,000 employees who participate in the development of an institutional culture on the subject, in 18 cities in different regions of the country.

The above is particularly relevant when considering the moment Colombia is going through, based on the process of dialogue, negotiation and signing of the peace agreements between the National Government and the FARC-EP guerrillas after five decades of conflict, where it is urgent and a priority to build and implement a solid and inclusive education system.

In these agreements, which lead to the construction of a culture of peace, the solidarity and cooperative economy has a significant role, appearing explicitly in the general agreement and in four of the five specific themes, such as: the solution to the problem of illicit drugs, integral rural development, democratic opening for political participation and justice for victims. Agreements which provide for the creation of incentives for different forms of association based on solidarity and cooperation as a means of strengthening the capacity of small producers to access goods and services that improve their living, working and production conditions (High Commissioner for Peace, 2016).

In this order of ideas, the theoretical-practical reflection proposed in this article contributes to the construction of a strategy to contribute to the peace process, based on citizen and institutional commitment to innovation in processes and scenarios where solidarity and cooperation play a fundamental role.

Literature Review

The literature referring to the teaching of the solidarity economy in higher education is scarce, the studies found deal with other educational levels or correspond to general reflections on education as the foundation of the culture and development of their organizations (Amariles, 2015; Fajardo, 2012).

However, some recent studies show, through the exploration and description of particular contexts, case studies, pedagogical approaches and significant practices of social projection and university research, that the social solidarity economy is an object of study that generates interdisciplinary approaches to a reality that has multiple expressions. In this process, the university connects with networks, organizations and companies that find in economic practices based on association, mutual aid and solidarity an alternative source for the development of their families and communities; from this, knowledge is created; practices that impact the institutional culture of the universities are generated; and at the same time, social innovation with the communities is favored (Coraggio, 2015).

Several of the researchers agree on the need for more in-depth studies in this area as a support for theoretical development, pedagogical practice, educational innovation

and the transfer of results to society (Cruz Souza, Cortegoso, Zanín, Shimbo, 2011; Oliveri, 2012; Marcuello, 2014; Juliá, Meliá and Lajara, 2015; Meredith and Quiroz, 2015; Irigoyen García, 2016; Flores Ruiz, Guzmán Alonso and Barroso, 2016).

Meredith and Quiroz (2015) consider that it is necessary to provoke a questioning of the role of university professors, in order to work for a more just and humane society and economy in their own communities and in a globalized context. They also propose an education by competences, which should be developed by both students and teachers; where the knowledge and experiences of these two actors of education dialogue with those of the organizations and communities in the territory.

Pastore (2015) points out that in the last five years there has been a greater production and a greater potential for connection between the various initiatives developed by higher education institutions (HEIs) and the needs and projections of the solidarity economy as an alternative for sustainable development. The author refers to the fact that in recent years the SSE has had a growing empirical, political and symbolic importance in South America, which can be seen from the increase or strengthening of organisations; the presence of the theme on the public agenda of local and national governments and in that of multilateral organisations; as well as the greater place of the SSE in academic debates on economic and social issues and its links with territorial development. It is also noted that there has been an incipient emergence of contributions to the symbolic dimension from the community and cooperative media, an increase in postgraduate academic offers and the development of academic projects in the territory with university extension programmes.

One of the most significant practices from the university environment towards the solidarity economy has been the creation of "incubators" or social laboratories, as spaces for the socialization of knowledge and support to self-managed collective undertakings in the external communities close to the institution. In Brazilian universities, these experiences have favored the articulation of the university's missionary functions, such as: teaching, research and extension with objectives that go beyond the promotion of economic changes, extending the impact to the development of socio-cultural changes for a more equitable and supportive society (Cruz Souza, Cortegoso, Zanín and Shimbo, 2011).

On the other hand, the University of Puebla in Mexico, provides significant experience from the creation of a Social and Economic Innovation Laboratory to contribute to the strengthening and sustainability of social economy enterprises, with a significant component of technological development and innovation (Irigoyen Garcia, 2016). The experience resulting from these spaces of social appropriation of knowledge demands promoting changes in the skills of teachers and students towards the management of social innovation and thus lead and undertake in solidarity with other actors in the territory, in order to transform the culture of solidarity organizations to complement the strategic advantages they already have as development alternatives (Monsalve Zapata, 2016).

Another interesting experience to consider is that developed by York St. John University, in the United Kingdom, with the support of the Erasmus programme. In 2013, a Social and Solidarity Economy Consortium was formed, which has made it possible to integrate academic spaces with university experiences from various countries around the world, including an international conference, blogs and joint publications; it also generated a proposal for curricular innovation in higher education focused on aspects such as the epistemology and values of the SSE; the profile of the actors, the modus operandi in the territory and its challenges; professional skills for students and teachers in relation to entrepreneurship and social innovation; ICTs and effective practices such as community radio, social capital, the responsibility of the university in social transformation and its ecosystems (Meredith and Quiroz, 2015).

There are several studies in Spain, among them Oliveri's (2012) which reports on the Mondragon university model, an experience that is an obligatory reference for those interested in cooperativism and the solidarity economy because of its history and achievements. Although the article does not deal with the subject of teaching content, it describes a model based on technical-scientific skills complemented by general skills such as teamwork, problem solving and leadership in careers offered on different campuses with convergence with local agents and companies. In order to promote the entrepreneurial spirit of students and teachers have created programs such as LEINN (Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Innovation) in the development of skills to generate employment and improve the competitiveness of business projects in the region.

Julià, Melià and Lajara (2015) consider that in the Spanish university system the functions of teaching and research have been positioned in the referencing systems, but that the function of transfer to society still has a very wide margin for improvement. For this reason, they suggest as a priority in the strategic plans of universities the promotion of technology transfer and business creation policies. In this context, the authors review the academic programmes and research products in the social economy, and find that there is room for a significant contribution to this function, especially from entrepreneurship and innovation. The authors point out the importance of sensitizing young innovators to cooperativism and its values as an option for improving the world.

In a review of research and teaching indicators on the Social Economy in Spain, Marcuello (2014) states that between 2011 and 2012, almost 40% of Spanish universities offered some kind of training related to the social economy in the postgraduate area. The list of programmes shows a diversity of degrees and subjects, including: marketing, management of cooperative enterprises, social economy enterprises, local development, territorial development, social entrepreneurship, diversity, inclusion and disability, agri-food companies, among others. Although it considers that in terms of postgraduate degrees the figure is not high, when following up on the research results the contributions are significant and it proposes as a challenge to research the contribution of the social economy to human development in order to value its social impact.

Flores Ruiz, Guzmán Alonso and Barroso G. (2016), also in Spain, suggest that postgraduate courses in the social economy should include content that delves into the microeconomic dimension of the social economy in terms of entrepreneurship, innovation, pro-activity, risk management, among others, with the aim of training managers and experts in this other form of economy with a territorial approach.

The studies reviewed so far coincide in highlighting the territorial dimension of the social and solidarity economy, both in the diagnoses and in the foresight of the role of universities in its development. Pastore (2015) poses the challenge of advancing in: "An academic-territorial proposal based on the ecology of knowledge, learning communities and the shared construction of socially relevant knowledge" (p.30)

The author warns that in this process of institutional transformation of the universities there will be support, opposition and inertia, and therefore it is pertinent to generate spaces for the active presence of the actors of the SSE in the university space and the participation of the different strata in order to advance in the deepening of university democracy from the perspective of the economy of solidarity.

Pérez Villa and Uribe Castrillón (2016) point out that the recognition of the territory as the point of origin and arrival of the solidarity economy is key in defining its relationship with higher education; meanwhile, it is necessary to highlight the necessary social construction of the territorial dimension and the relations of power, resistance and agreement that define the dynamics of its actors, among them, the university institution.

Moreover, Albuquerque and Perez (2013) point out as a conditioning factor of territorial development the relationship, reflection and proposal action with key actors such as local governments, entrepreneurs, organizations, financial institutions and universities; with the purpose of taking advantage of resources and opportunities of the environment for the improvement of productivity, competitiveness and quality of life in the regions.

At this point in the conceptual reflection on the characteristics of solidarity education at the higher level, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the concept of "Ecology of knowledge" contributes significantly, which is key when it comes to redimensioning the relationship between the university and society. De Sousa Santos (2007) defines it as a set of practices that promote the coexistence and appreciation of knowledge, including scientific knowledge and other knowledge resulting from practical experience, shared by groups of citizens in the university space.

This is especially relevant when carrying out research-action-solidarity education processes, as it is considered that the practices to produce, distribute, consume or finance in a cooperative and associative way, are developed in the local sphere and some of them even have ancestral correlates. In this sense, the networks, organizations and companies have social and economic trajectories pre-existing to their relation with the academy; for that reason, the university actors do not start from zero or reveal theories from abstract concepts, on the contrary, they find in the popular knowledge a source of knowledge that allows them to learn; in this measure it is made reference to a solidarity

reorientation of the University-society relationship (De Sousa Santos, 2007).

Materials and methods

The study was carried out using the action research (AR) methodology which is oriented towards educational change. It is built from and for practice, which transforms through its understanding, demands the participation of the educational actors in the improvement, requires group action for the coordination of all the phases of the process, implies a critical analysis and is carried out as a spiral in cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection (Bausela Herrera, 2004). This type of research starts with the diagnosis of the phenomenon from different horizons, followed by the planning of action for the transformation of the object reality; bearing in mind that reflection, collection and systematization of information become transversal axes of research and open spaces for discussion and assessment of achievements and limitations, which allow for timely decisions to be made in each phase or cycle. To this end, techniques such as online surveys were applied to students taking the three (3) institutional courses on solidarity economy, and also focus groups with students and teachers.

In practice, it has been confirmed that this methodology can be addressed in different ways, depending on its objectives and the roles for its participants (Bausela, 2004), according to Grundy's models, who identifies three types of action research: first, technical AR, which generates technical explanatory knowledge and improves the effectiveness of the system; second, practical AR, which allows for the understanding of reality for action; and third, critical AR, oriented towards emancipation and social change.

This study is set in the period between 2014-2016. It is designed to accompany the implementation process of the solidarity economy courses created in 2013, within the framework of the curricular reform of the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, based on a competence-based approach. It is interesting to mention that in the development of the research process there is a gradual transition between the three types of action research referred to, as the academic community has the possibility of participating more and more actively in the process of creating and improving the initial proposal.

In this way, two cycles can be considered to have been developed to date, the first with a technical

action research focus, guided by the researchers of the Institute of Social Economy and Cooperativism-Indesco in the year 2014; the second, with a practical action research approach, where the role of the expert researcher changes to that of process facilitator and the teachers take on action research as part of their work, integrating good practices from teaching, research and social projection, broadening their view of an educational model in which the solidarity economy is not limited to the courses evaluated, but is the transversal axis of the institutional educational proposal in 2015; in 2016, a cycle with a critical-emancipatory approach begins to be enunciated, which is in the planning phase.

The cyclical action research exercise is carried out on the 18 university campuses; three types of instruments are used to collect information: an online survey for students, whose processing and analysis is of a descriptive statistical type, and information provided by students and professors through focus groups, which allows for a qualitative descriptive exploration. The systematization carried out leads to communication and management agreements between the participants and the formulation of improvement proposals for the educational strategy in general, which are documented in the semester reports prepared by the university's Institute of Social Economy and Indesco Cooperativism (Gómez, Rua and Pérez, 2016).

Results

The survey is sent every six months, to the total number of students enrolled in solidarity economy courses in the period (2015-2016), has been voluntarily answered by an average of 7.4% (1,736) students belonging to all the careers offered by the university in the different areas of knowledge, on average 64% of them are in an age range between 17-25 years and most of them are women (60%). Table 1 below shows the behavior of student participation by period.

Table 1. Student participation by academic period.

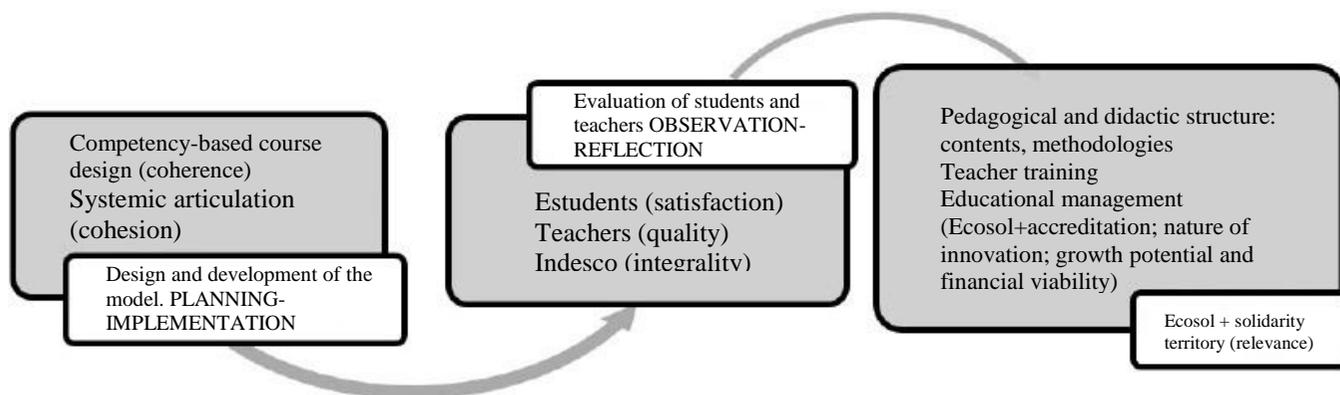
| Period | Universe | Participants | % of participation |
|----------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| 2015 – 1 | 7,023 | 592 | 8.43% |
| 2015 – 2 | 7,674 | 716 | 9.33% |
| 2016 – 1 | 8,476 | 428 | 5.04% |
| Totals | 23,173 | 1,736 | 7.49% |

Source: Online Survey Virtual Platform ES-E-learning Courses-UCC, 2015-2016.

In the three academic periods corresponding to 2015 and the first semester of 2016, 100 students and 43 teachers participated in the two types of focal groups. The criteria for the selection of students were as follows: at least 80% have seen a course in solidarity economy in previous semesters; at least 50% are women; they represent all the programmes that exist at headquarters; at least 50% have developed half of their professional training cycle.

Regarding the professors, no selection criteria were established, their participation was voluntary, the 43 participants represent about 50% of the total professors, 73% have graduate degrees, they come from all areas of knowledge, among them, there are engineers, administrators, accountants, economists, educators, sociologists and a veterinarian, some of them are university graduates and 5 are also researchers. Figure 1 shows the cycle of practical AR that was developed in the period studied.

Figure 1. Methodological route of action-research for university education in solidarity economy.



Source: Own elaboration

The following is a summary of the main results of the research process that has been developed from the quantitative and qualitative information collected. The good practices and reflections lead to a new phase, in which it is expected that improvements will be institutionalized, the competencies already achieved will be strengthened and the transfer to the territory will be made as a contribution to the construction of peace scenarios in the country.

Discussion of results

Starting in 2014, the action-research project will monitor progress and opportunities for improvement and specify the changes that are made every six months, as well as those suggested for the longer term by building a quality assurance system that is gradually defined with indicators of consistency with the institutional project, cohesion with the university system, student satisfaction with the educational

experience, quality of teachers, completeness of the proposal and its relevance to their territorial contribution.

The following are the main results of the exercise in three dimensions: the pedagogical and didactic structure (contents and methodologies), the strengthening of the team of teachers and the alignment with the institutional educational project.

Pedagogical and didactic structure

The first version of the courses was called Beta, once the study plan was defined, we resorted to contents obtained from the Internet and databases, we still did not have our own contents; from the evaluation of the initial cycle of the project, we built the Alpha version with a significant increase of our own contents developed by the professors, with audiovisual products from students or custom designed with the communications management of the university.

In addition, we hired thematic experts to prepare master documents for each of the courses, which allowed us to incorporate the suggestions of students and professors in the updating and adjustment of contents.

Every six months, the virtual learning objects have been updated and the instructional design has been changed to facilitate navigation and appropriation of content. The search is beginning to be oriented towards the repositories that are held in recognized portals of the solidarity economy, such as the ILO's Collective Brain, the Reas network, the Education and Solidarity Economy Network and Socioeco.org, among others. In this way, we take advantage of the developments derived from research and systematized social practice that are freely shared by various international networks, which are permanently updated and have institutional support; this is complemented by our own virtual objects and thus favors the quality and timeliness of the didactic resources used. In recent contacts with the administrators of these portals, a line has been defined to share the good materials that are already being produced at the university.

As for the methodology, initially the courses are offered in a completely virtual mode on the Blackboard educational platform. In 2014, based on the results of the evaluations, the inclusion of classroom-based moments is conceived, as experiential spaces of the solidarity economy that favor the learning process of the young student and the transfer of the culture of the solidarity economy to the university environment.

The moments of attendance are an important achievement of institutionalization, although they are not yet realized in their best version because of the magnitude that implies in terms of programming and academic planning of activities, for a group of about 8000 students who take the courses every semester; To date, spaces have been created that link traditional expressions of solidarity economy such as barter and agro-ecological fairs, awareness and practice of fair trade and responsible consumption, as well as environmental sustainability, through recycling and reuse of electronic objects.

These significant experiences are carried out in university settings, as well as in local environments with volunteer networks, which promote skills related to coexistence, respect for the environment and thus activate citizenship that supports a supportive and democratic action in society. In turn, solidarity entrepreneurship contributes to the development of competencies for collaborative work, critical thinking and communication skills.

The statistics derived from the surveys and the information collected in the focus groups, show a favorable trend in the satisfaction that students show about the solidarity economy courses, figures that exceed 74%, rising between 10 and 14 points from the first measurement. Young people are willing to learn about the subject, actively use the virtual platform and there is a gradual increase in the perception of the link between the skills acquired and their professional future.

Obviously, the desired point has not been reached; it is expected that satisfaction will continue to increase as adjustments are made to the courses, taking into account a greater role for students and knowledge of their interests, needs and expectations; face-to-face moments are institutionalized; a didactic approach is adopted that uses the potential of virtuality to foster creativity and networking. The degree of satisfaction of the students presents the following behavior in the referenced period. (Table 2).

Table 2. Degree of student satisfaction with ES courses

| Period | Participant Students | Between Excellent and Good | To be improved |
|---------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 2015-1 | 592 | 64,18% | 27,87% |
| 2015-2 | 716 | 74,70% | 25,30% |
| 2016-1 | 428 | 70,80% | 29,24% |
| Average | 1,736 | 69,90% | 27,47% |

Source: Online Survey Virtual Platform Courses ES- E-learning - UCC 2015-2016

Tensions persist regarding the virtual mode as opposed to the face-to-face mode, despite observing a greater positioning of virtuality (47%). However, it remains close to 28% with preference for the face-to-face mode and about 25% that proposes the mixed mode. In this sense, the justification for face-to-face moments as a complement to online education is reinforced.

On the other hand, it is expected that there will be an increase in the positive perception of virtual education, as the culture of virtuality increases in the university, which is advanced by the development of repositories and the introduction of the use of virtual classrooms extended to the other courses of the curriculum; the incentive for teachers to make educational innovations through the use of ICTs, among other strategies that are already being implemented.

Although the experience has as a reference what happened in the virtual or face-to-face classroom, with the face-to-face moments and the individual or group work exercises in context, the experience of the solidarity economy has extended to new environments and settings with a positive impact on learning outcomes, the evidence is documented in reports, photographs, videos, press releases and own designs for new activities.

The harmonious progress of the institutional area with curricular reform is also a key factor, because it involves unifying concepts and strategies from all areas in order to give coherence and cohesion to the route taken, and this will be perceived favorably by students. The permanent challenge for educational improvement is related to the possibility of introducing active methodologies, new scenarios and formats that promote the development of communication and citizenship skills in young university students. 64.63% of the students surveyed are between 17 and 25 years old; then, "a key axis of the relevance of the action is the recognition of young subjects who receive undergraduate training as citizens in the exercise of their rights, creative and fully competent for community life" (Indesco, 2013: 5). The university assumes responsibility for providing Colombian youth with training that links them to their community and provides them with opportunities to contribute to its development.

In order to achieve greater proximity to young people, in addition to the courses, the use of new communication formats on the subject has been explored and the university has provided incentives to reward good practices. Thus, a video contest was created to illustrate the link between their careers and the solidarity economy, whose prize consisted of inviting the winners to participate in an international

event of the International Cooperative Alliance - ICA. In one week, 61 videos were received and the winners, a student of Psychology from Monteria and a law student from Arauca, were able to connect with the young people of the ICA at the event in Panama. The best videos became objects of information for the courses and dissemination of the educational strategy in other academic settings.

Another institutionalized space is the Rymel Serrano Uribe Award, created in 2012, which includes a category for young students who present ideas for associative and solidarity businesses as a contribution to the construction of scenarios and territories of peace. Work has been done so that the final product of the solidarity entrepreneurship course will allow them to participate in the competition and there is a progressive improvement in the participation and quality of the proposals. To date, there are almost 100 ideas documented on video and in Canvas social formats. These experiences have allowed the experience of solidarity to go beyond the academic discourse and be integrated into the professional and daily life of students in the form of generic skills for entrepreneurship.

In the following cycle, based on the last pedagogical reflections of the teachers' collective, it is expected to deepen the evaluation by competences in order to specify the impact of the educational proposal and to refine the proposed competences if it is considered necessary; improvements will be oriented towards other scenarios of linkage between the disciplinary fields, the needs and the developments of the solidarity economy in the territory, seeking a greater transversality for the theme.

Progress has already been made with the Faculty of Business Administration and its Solidarity Monitors programme, a degree programme that allows students to create or strengthen solidarity economy organizations. Currently, the possible and desirable linkage of the courses is being defined within the framework of the articulation of the university's entrepreneurial ecosystem, as well as throughout the degree course until reaching the postgraduate level.

At the same time, the conditions are being created to promote a greater rapprochement between research, teaching and social projection, as there are multi-campus projects on topics such as family agriculture, public policies, solidarity integration, fair trade and solidarity entrepreneurship, among others, deriving spaces for the appropriation of knowledge that favor

the dialogue of knowledge with the community and the linkage of students through the design and implementation of free chairs and the emergence of research seedbeds.

Strengthening the team of solidarity economy teachers

The teachers in the area make up a team with relative stability in their work, most of them with full-time and part-time contracts (80%) and a minority with a teaching position (20%). The training is interdisciplinary, 86% have postgraduate studies. The project has proposed goals and has achievements around the consolidation of a new profile of teachers that has theoretical and practical connection with the solidarity economy, it is not conceived in the exercise of repeating contents or proposing mechanical activities to their students through the virtual platform. Therefore, throughout the process, teachers, besides acquiring new knowledge, develop skills and attitudes for their participation in the theoretical and practical construction of the solidarity economy, which also increases the possibility of influencing the environment as researchers, educators or solidarity entrepreneurs.

As they participate in the action research exercise, they increase their autonomy and creativity on the virtual platform; they design face-to-face moments for the entire university community; the role of content managers changes towards the design of active learning environments that are highly demanding when planning, implementing and evaluating the process of education in solidarity economy. We now have teachers who are "didactic hunters", systematizers of experiences, developers of information objects, among other roles.

The School of Excellence and Indesco have accompanied the process, offering two diploma courses on topics and methodologies in line with the required competencies. The first was aimed at appropriating the new model and exploring teaching strategies for young university students, and accompanied the Beta version of the courses in 2014; the second diploma was "Solidarity Economy: reality, theory and project" in 2015, directed by Chilean teacher Luis Razeto M. The diplomas were offered in a virtual mode, working simultaneously with teachers from the 18 branches in the country. In 2016 some professors participated in the MOOC offered by the University of Mondragon.

To date, close to 60% of teachers have been covered in qualification processes and new teachers with doctoral training in the subject are arriving. For the next cycle, international agreements and activities with universities working on solidarity economy in Spain, Mexico and Argentina are in progress to share knowledge and experiences.

The results of the focus groups show a positive evaluation by the teachers of the new contents and the virtual environment, although they suggest that attendance be institutionalized and included as a second option for offering the courses. They coincide in mentioning the strengthening of the academic community through active participation in processes of reflection, design, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of improvement plans. They also identify tensions in the face of the possibility of falling into activism (programming of fairs, campaigns, visits) without the corresponding time and knowledge for the systematization of experiences, suggesting the need for future training in qualitative research and systematization of experiences for the measurement of the impact of university activity and the solidarity economy in their respective contexts.

The professors call attention to the importance of giving more transversality to the theme of solidarity economy, suggesting inserting contents and practices in courses of other areas of the curriculum if one wants to transform both the attitude of students towards the theme, improve the institutional culture and the impact generated in society.

For the next cycle of critical-emancipatory action research, the professors prepare themselves for the change of roles, the design and implementation of new activities, among them, the project that gives continuity to the route already initiated is in the process of approval; there some of them will participate as researchers. The creation of a virtual learning community for educational innovation in the territory is planned and greater participation is expected in the communication campaign that the university has been carrying out with the slogan "Peace needs a more supportive economy" (Redess and Indesco, 2015). From this new process will emerge the range version of the courses.

We agree with Amariles Mejía (2015) that educators are needed who are open to prior knowledge, to criticism and to difference, with the aim of demonstrating in educational practice itself the meaning of recognizing others and promoting their emancipation.

Alignment with the institutional educational project

In a recent update of the National Strategic Plan "Navigating Together 2013-2022" three attributes are ratified that distinguish the Cooperative University of Colombia, being multicampus, projecting itself socially and practicing and promoting the solidarity economy by fulfilling its missionary commitment as an Auxiliary Institution of Cooperativism². This means that the project, with its results, contributes to strengthening the mission, vision, values and culture of the university (UCC, 2016)

On the other hand, the university carries out processes of self-evaluation and continuous improvement in pursuit of educational excellence and the achievement of institutional accreditation. To this end, quality standards have been defined in each of its mission and support processes, including those related to teaching, research and the social projection of solidarity economy. In this sense, the results of the project become evidence or indicators of achievement or opportunities for improvement in the face of the value proposal that the university has made to society.

The organization of barter fairs, free lectures, contests, and business exhibitions contribute to strengthening the identity and internal culture of the institution in relation to the solidarity economy, allowing the different levels of the university community to experience it or at least to become aware of its existence and potential. The systematization of these experiences registers the increase in the participation of administrative and academic officials in the spaces created from the moments of attendance of the courses.

At the same time, the solidarity economy has favoured in its interrelations with teaching, research and social projection, university practices that, together with the other social services generated from the legal, administrative and health offices, contribute to the well-being and good life of the communities close to the institution, which is reflected in the indicators published in the Social Balance that is carried out annually. This is particularly important for a multi-campus university with a regional vocation and a national radius of action (UCC, 2016).

2. According to the Congress of Colombia, Law 79 of 1988, art. 123, says: Auxiliary institutions of the cooperative movement are non-profit legal entities that are set up for the purpose of increasing and developing the cooperative sector, by carrying out activities designed to provide, preferably, the competent bodies of the cooperative sector with the necessary support and assistance to facilitate the best achievement of their economic and social purposes.

Conclusions

The solidarity economy in the current social, political, educational and cultural conditions has a special space that perhaps it has never had before. The failure of the dominant model and the emergence of cultural movements and new knowledge from the different areas that promote solidarity and cooperation as a condition for sustainable development favor the advancement of its reality, its theory and its project. Solidarity economy organizations and their members have an opportunity and a challenge to demonstrate that their values and practices contribute to the good life and the future of the planet.

On the other hand, universities have a key role to play in promoting alternative models of development such as the solidarity economy. Research-action and social innovation contribute, among other aspects, to solidarity entrepreneurship and thus to the transition of solidarity organizations from subsistence to development.

It also becomes an added value of cultural transformation from the university to society that young university students and other members of the university community become aware and acquire skills to exercise active citizenship that allows them to practice and propose new forms of consumption, distribution, production and storage of goods and services, based on solidarity associations.

In this context, the research-action exercise carried out, as part of the implementation process of the proposal of education in solidarity economy at the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, provides evidence of educational innovation, opportunities for improvement and challenges that serve as lessons for the institution, in turn are topics of reflection to share with the academic community in different latitudes has indicated the importance and need to advance in solidarity educational models that promote throughout life, in formal and informal spaces: active citizenship, dialogue of knowledge and connection with the actors in the territory in pursuit of sustainable development.

Although the results have not been extended to the entire academic community, the learning and good practices achieved in the contents and learning environments, such as in the qualification of teachers

and the alignment with the institutional project show a process of educational innovation with potential for growth and transfer to the entire university system.

The use of ICTs strengthens technological, communication, pedagogical, research and management skills; in turn, it increases educational opportunities for the exchange and democratization of knowledge in local, regional, national and international settings. It is expected that progress will be made in strengthening virtual communities between headquarters and with the external academic community in exercises that favour internationalisation and inter- and transdisciplinary work.

The challenges are considered to be to achieve greater transversality of the theme and a greater connection between the solidarity economy and the disciplines in the dynamics of advancing curricular reform; it is necessary to refine the focus on learning processes, to date the emphasis has been on teaching; in turn, the deepening of evaluation by competencies will open spaces to give visibility to the competencies achieved, enriching the curriculum design and specifying metrics that combine with the system of institutional indicators.

In the next cycle of the project's educational improvement, the territorial approach is already one of its distinctive features. With the gradual increase of institutional competencies through the solidarity economy by each of the levels, including administrative officials, it is expected that progress will be made in the Solidarity Territories project, a mega-project that will allow each headquarters to socially construct, with the different internal and external actors, action plans with indicators, goals and results referring to the sustainable development of the territory as a full exercise of university social responsibility (Pérez Villa and Uribe Castrillón, 2016).

This is very appropriate in the current situation of the country after the signing of the peace agreements where it is proposed to stimulate and promote partnerships and solidarity economy to improve living, working and production conditions of men and women in rural communities (Final Agreement for the End of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace, 2016). In this way, we are facing an opportunity and a great challenge that requires coordinated action between organized civil society and the government, and in this, the universities will have a leading role.

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