

Public Policies on Higher Education. Rhetoric and Grammar of Modernity and the limits of Social Recognition.

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Abstract

Worldwide contemporary public policies in Higher Education are explained through the rationality of an academic capitalism and the idea of a progress as the cornerstone of Modernity. This particularly way of thinking has the capacity to change values into attitudes and those into institutional goals, by bringing together individualism, competition, effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, success and excellence, as the main values of an institutional contemporary hegemonic ideology of quality of education.

Quality as one of the most relevant and current public policies in Higher Education is sociological defined as a public ritual of an official and institutional act. The ceremonies of quality offer scholars the sense of been socially recognized by a highly estimation of their academic work; however, this recognition could easily become a fine institutional device of social control that can definitely affect the identity of scholars and the nature of their academic work.

This paper is based on a research developed at the University of Guadalajara, in Mexico, 2006-2009, regarding the relationship between public policies of Quality in Higher Education and the institutional recognition among scholars' academic production and performance. The social, academic and political complexity of the University of Guadalajara located in Mexico, as one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education around the country, will offer us the opportunity to put the scholars' interpretations of quality into context of mostly all universities in Mexico. It is about how scholars experience the public policy of quality of education and how this policy affects their social, educational and professional trajectories.

The research findings revealed that quality of education is equated with the traditional institutional social recognition and for that reason, the institutions of higher education are compel to participate within an academic capitalism to maintain the requirements of the quality of education. The relationships produced by the triangle of quality of education, social recognition for institutional control and the participation in a global market of knowledge are deeply affecting the trajectories of scholars in higher education in Mexico and are making evident different social pathologies among the institutions in higher education, such as the lack of scholars autonomy, the presence of individualism, and the disorientation of their education project, among others.

Key words: Higher Education, Public Policies, Quality of Education, Social Recognition, Social Pathologies.