

# ***Institutionalization of the process of evaluation and accreditation in higher education in Bolivia***

## ***Institucionalización de los procesos de evaluación y acreditación universitaria en Bolivia***

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**Abstract:** This paper has the objective to think about the deinstitutionalization of the process of evaluation and accreditation in higher education by the Evaluation and Accreditation in Higher Education Multinational Agency. The exhaustive search the bibliography established that the creation of abovementioned Agency has not materialized the reforest does not let the Agency to do the abovementioned processes thematically. The evaluation and accreditation in higher education in Bolivia are still executed by the Bolivian University Executive Committee and by the Department of Education.

**Keywords:** Apeaesu; Agency of evaluation and accreditation in Bolivia; Deinstitutionalization

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**Resumen:** El presente artículo tiene como objetivo demostrar la desinstitucionalización de los procesos de evaluación y acreditación universitaria en Bolivia por parte de la Agencia Plurinacional de la Evaluación y Acreditación de la Educación Superior Universitaria. La búsqueda exhaustiva de la bibliografía determinó que la creación de la mencionada agencia no se ha concretado, lo que impide que los procesos mencionados se lleven a cabo de manera sistemática por dicho organismo. La evaluación y acreditación universitaria en Bolivia continúan siendo llevados a cabo por el Comité Ejecutivo de la Universidad Boliviana y por el Ministerio de Educación.

**Palabras clave:** Institucionalización; Evaluación y acreditación; Desinstitucionalización; Acreditación universitaria

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## **Introduction**

At present, social changes and those imposed by science and technology have affected Higher Education. This situation requires universities to continuously review their methods, content, management and structures to adapt to these changes (Auza, 2016).

The traditional university structure has not been relevant in terms of raising quality and equity, which has motivated higher education institutions to include processes for measuring the quality of educational strategies and policies that aim to respond to new social demands (Tirado, 2016).

From the above, agencies, organizations or systems responsible for carrying out the processes of evaluation and university accreditation in the different regions of the world have been created.

In the United States there are six recognized agencies, some of them with more than 120 years of operation. Over time, these six entities have standardized their criteria and procedures (Miranda, 2016a).

The setting up of agencies in Europe takes place as of 1990. In most cases they have been established in response to the deepening of the European Union. These agencies have the main tasks of quality assurance and support the process of adjustment to the guidelines established by the European Union (Miranda, 2016a).

In Latin America, different types of agencies coexist in the same country. There are public but autonomous entities in relation to the Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Puerto Rico governments; in the same way agencies belonging to the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay; there are also private organizations in Chile, Panama and Puerto Rico, and entities dependent on higher education institutions in Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay (Noda and Surós, 2016).

In Bolivia there is a division in university higher education between the System of the Bolivian University (SUB) of autonomous character, and the Plurinational Educational System that depends on the Ministry of Education. This division is manifested in the legal, academic and in the conception of educational quality and its evaluation (Alcón, 2016).

The Executive Committee of the Bolivian University (CEUB), through its National Secretariat for Evaluation and Accreditation (SNEA), is the organization in charge of carrying out the evaluation and accreditation processes in the universities of the SUB. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education is responsible for carrying out the aforementioned processes in private, indigenous and special regime universities. It should be noted that the Regional Accreditation System of University Careers (ARCU-SUR) accredits careers of private and autonomous public universities through the National Commission of University Careers Accreditation (CNACU), Bolivian corporate system.

However, current regulations establish the creation of an agency responsible for evaluating and accrediting the educational quality of all the universities recognized by the Education Law 070,

that is, the universities that make up the SUB and the universities of the Plurinational State of Bolivia that include private, indigenous and special regime.

The importance and social need that is granted to the processes of university evaluation and accreditation in Bolivia are anchored in governing documents such as the Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009) and in the Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Education Law No. 70 (2010).

The Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009) states that "The monitoring, measurement, evaluation and accreditation of educational quality throughout the education system, will be in charge of a public institution, specialized technique, independent of the Ministry of the field. Its composition and operation will be determined by law "(p.19).

On the other hand, the Law on Education Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez No.70 (2010), in its article 68, section three, establishes the creation of the Plurinational Agency for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education in Universities (APEAESU), a decentralized agency, conformed by a Directory and a Specialized Technical Team whose operation and financing will be regulated by Supreme Decree.

Studies carried out by Auza (2016), Alcón (2016), Yujra (2016) and Olmos (2017), agree that the creation of the APEAESU has not materialized, which makes imposible the institutionalization of university evaluation and accreditation processes by the aforementioned body.

The situation described is an obstacle to raise the quality of university higher education in Bolivia. The Bolivian scientific community has the challenge of finding solutions to this problem. In this regard, this article aims to demonstrate the deinstitutionalization of the processes of evaluation and accreditation of university higher education APEAESU.

The methodology used consisted in the bibliographic review of sources that contain institutionalization concepts, background of evaluation and accreditation agencies in Europe, the United States, Latin America and Bolivia with the purpose of supporting the object of study. Two books, a doctoral thesis, two master's theses, five scientific articles, four training materials, two normative documents, a blog, and two Internet pages that were relevant to support the object of study of the present investigation were selected as sample.

## Development

The study of the institutionalization category allowed determining that it has different meanings according to research of authors of different nationalities. This is the case of Selznick (1957, 1996), Scott (1991), Rodríguez (2015), Guevara, Pacheco and Pacheco (2016), among others.

Selznick (1957) points out that institutionalization is a neutral idea that becomes evident with the emergence of socially integrated, ordered and stable patterns that originate from usually unstable, restricted or weakly organized technical activities.

Scott (1991) suggests that it is a process of adaptation to values that are known by social relationships.

Selznick (1996) argues that institutionalization is a process by which organizations develop a class of structures in which some socially ordered and stable patterns of integration are distinguished.

Rodríguez (2015) conceives it as the application and realization of a continuous process. In the present research the acceptance of the aforementioned author is assumed, since it corresponds to the meaning that is intended to be granted to the term institutionalization, that is, the systematic application of the processes of evaluation and university accreditation made by agencies, systems or organizations.

In Europe, the evaluation and accreditation processes have had their development, a phenomenon that is manifested in the continuous realization of these by agencies.

In this regard, the National Agency for the Evaluation of Quality and Accreditation (ANECA), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), among others, are created in Europe.

In the United States, there are several quality assurance agencies, such as the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASEC), the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS), the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the Northwest Association of Schools and

Colleges (NASC), and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) (Miranda, 2016a).

In Latin America, entities have been created such as the National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CONAEVA) of Mexico, the Higher Council of Education (CSE) of Chile, the National Accreditation Council (CNA) of Colombia, the Program of Institutional Evaluation of the Brazilian Universities (PAIUBE) of Brazil, the National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEAU) of Argentina, the National System of Evaluation and Superior Accreditation (SINAES) of Costa Rica, the National Agency of Evaluation and Accreditation of the Higher Education (ANAES) of Paraguay, the National System of Evaluation of Higher Education (SINAES) of Brazil, among others (Miranda, 2016a).

Despite the creation of agencies, organizations and instances of quality assurance, to the present there is no accreditation that grants a serious certification of educational quality. In this regard, it is stated: "There are no national / international agencies that can offer an international accreditation formally recognized as such (neither in Europe, nor in North America, nor in Asia, nor in Latin America)" (Miranda, 2016b, p.16).

In the specific case of Bolivia, in 1994, with the promulgation of the Law on Educational Reform or Law 1565, the setting up of instances such as the National System of Accreditation and Measurement of Educational Quality (SINAMED) was established; administered by the National Council for the Accreditation and Measurement of Educational Quality (CONAMED), which aimed to certify the measurement of educational quality and the accreditation of programs, careers and institutions of all levels of education; and the National Subsystem of Quality Measurement (SIMECAL), technical body of CONAMED, whose objective was to provide valid and reliable information about the levels reached by students in terms of acquisition and development of skills (Daza, 2003).

The creation of the referenced organizations, established in Law 1565, shows the increase in the importance of educational quality. It should be noted the purpose of certifying the measurement and accreditation of quality, both for autonomous public universities and private, since until now

there is no single agency that evaluates and accredits the educational quality of these types of universities with the same standards.

The Bolivian University rejected Articles 21, 22, 23, 33, 34 and 53, related to SINAMED, CONAMED and SIMECAL because they violated Articles 185 and 187 of the Political Constitution of the State and presented a judgment of inapplicability before the Supreme Court of Justice and unconstitutionality of the mentioned articles (Daza, 2003).

The rejection of the articles mentioned by the SUB is a clear example of the rivalry and antagonism between the SUB and private universities. This situation has not made it possible to hold meetings or systematic meetings of both sectors.

In 2005, the National Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education (CONAES) was created, with a public nature. It was responsible for the accreditation of the quality of careers and academic programs, public and private institutions. Among its purposes, it was emphasized to guarantee the continuous improvement of the academic quality of institutions, careers and programs, and to respond to the commitments of the Bolivian State in matters of subregional and regional academic integration (Daza and Padilla, 2014).

The aforementioned body was in charge of carrying out the self-assessment, external evaluation by peer evaluators, and accreditation processes based on four dimensions: institutional context, academic project, human resources and infrastructure, and equipment. However, several factors influenced so that its implementation has not been carried out.

The lack of implementation of CONAES impeded the continuous improvement of the quality of university higher education in Bolivia jointly of both autonomous public and private universities, in addition, has not allowed the country to have a participatory role in the evaluation and accreditation processes in the regional context. It highlights the similarity of the dimensions of the aforementioned organism with those of the ARCU-SUR System.

In 2010, the CNACU is created. This corporate organization's main purpose is to contribute to the improvement of quality through actions, one of which is the management of the creation and implementation of APEAESU.

As can be seen, the concern for the improvement of educational quality is reinforced by the creation of an agency in charge of coordinating the foundation of APEAESU. However, until the making of this article, when this creation is not made concrete, the inefficiency in the fulfillment of one of the actions of the CNACU for the achievement of the improvement of the educational quality is manifested: creation and implementation of the APEAESU.

On September 26, 2012, the National Technical Meeting of Directors of Evaluation and Accreditation of the SUB was held, convened by the SNEA to give treatment to the APEAESU bill; and for the following and subsequent day, the CNACU convened the First National Meeting entitled "Towards the consolidation of APEAESU and evaluation of the ARCU-SUR System of MERCOSUR Education". Both events were very intense since the indicators and instruments of the peer evaluators and the Ministry of Education, the CEUB and the National Association of Private Universities (ANUP) (APRECIA, 2012) counted consolidation proposals of the mentioned agency.

The aforementioned events have in common the treatment of the creation of the APEAESU, which constitutes relevant facts to the present investigation. The work of the SNEA and the CNACU in the organization of these events should be highlighted, since bringing together two antagonistic sectors of university higher education in Bolivia such as the SUB and the ANUP has always been a very complex task.

In 2017, the CNACU organizes a meeting of the representatives of the accrediting agencies of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, rectors of Bolivian public and private universities, university federations and Bolivian educational actors with the aim of exchanging experiences around the processes and factors of success of the experiences of conformation of National Accreditation Agencies in view of the constitution of the APEAESU, in the framework of the creation of this. The participants presented their respective experiences of creation and the forms of coordination with the national academic actors and with the ARCU-SUR system (Pessoa, 2017).

It should be noted the socialization of experiences of creation of National Accreditation Agencies by the participants of the mentioned meeting, since with their exhibitions they contribute to the

constitution of the APEAESU. However, it should be noted that since the enactment of the 070 Education Law, which establishes the creation of the APEAESU, until the realization of the referenced meeting, the creation of the APEAESU had not materialized, which indicates the lack of compliance of what is established by Law 070.

As can be seen, there is scarce scientific production and information about the consolidation of the creation of the APEAESU. The work of the CNACU to concretize the creation of the mentioned instance is reflected in the organization of meetings that have had as a central axis the treatment of the APEAESU. However, the work of the CNACU until the preparation of the present investigation has no results. This situation does not allow the processes of evaluation and accreditation by the APEAESU to be institutionalized.

In this article, it is recommended that this and the other investigations related to the institutionalization of the processes of university evaluation and accreditation in Bolivia be taken into account in order to fill theoretical and methodological gaps in the treatment of the subject. In addition, it is recommended to continue investigating the subject to contribute to the proposals for possible solutions to the problem of the deinstitutionalization of the mentioned processes by the APEAESU.

## **Conclusions**

The bibliography consulted showed that until the preparation of this article the creation of the APEAESU has not been consolidated, a situation that does not allow the institutionalization of the evaluation and accreditation processes by the aforementioned agency. Meetings have been held with the objective of concretizing the creation of APEAESU, however, they were not successful. There is scarce scientific production related to the deinstitutionalization of university evaluation and accreditation by APEAESU. It is a challenge for the university evaluation and accreditation in Bolivia to specify the creation of the APEAESU so that the aforementioned processes can be continuously carried out.

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