

***Promoción de la cultura agroecológica montañosa en
estudiantes universitarios para el desarrollo local.
Consideraciones***
***Promotion of mountain agroecological culture in university
students for local development. Considerations***

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RESUMEN: El artículo aborda una sistematización de consideraciones teóricas como parte de la Política Universitaria para el conocimiento y desarrollo local, ordenada prioridades y perspectivas que incidirán en el Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral de cada municipio. Como objetivo la sistematización de referentes teóricos para la promoción de la cultura agroecológica montañosa desde la extensión universitaria en estudiantes universitarios. El uso los métodos análisis-síntesis, inducción- deducción y hermenéutico dialéctico, proporcionaron las valoraciones del proceso formativo extensionista y sus principales inconsistencias en este campo, que proveen la comprensión desde el objeto. Las consideraciones aportadas facilitan elementos de contextualización del proceso en los territorios.

Palabras clave: Extensión universitaria; Cultura agroecológica montañesa; Promoción cultural; Desarrollo local

ABSTRACT: The article addresses a systematization of theoretical considerations as part of the University Policy for local knowledge and development, ordered priorities and perspectives that will influence the Integral Development Project of each municipality. The objective is the systematization of theoretical references for the promotion of the mountain agroecological culture from the university extension in university students. The use of the analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and dialectical hermeneutic methods, provided the evaluations of the extensionist formative process and its main inconsistencies in this field, which provide the understanding from the object. The considerations provided facilitate elements of contextualization of the process in the territories.

Keywords: University extension; Mountain agroecological culture; Cultural promotion; Local development

Introduction

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (2022), agriculture represents 70% of the source of income of the rural population in the world; being among the most sacrificing and not risk-free jobs, where hunger already reaches 193 million people in the world. (p. 1)

In this context, organizations dedicated to the subject such as FAO and WFP (World Food Program), have gained space in the scientific field, because the policies of sovereignty and food security have not achieved stability in this aspect, so far, to guarantee the productive self-sufficiency of the localities, among which the mountainous ones are meant to eliminate foreign food dependence.

In Cuba, the public policy aimed at the use of agroecology as a response to the deficit of agricultural inputs, the Cuban president Miguel Díaz Canel Bermúdez, refers to the importance of resuming this approach, referring to agroecology as one of the ways to achieve a different state in food production for the people (2021, p. 3), later emphasizes in the Conference at the XIII International Congress of Higher Education, that science and innovation driven by the University are essentially to meet the challenges in food production (2022, p. 1) and, universities should be key players in research and development of agroecological practices, as well as in the training of professionals trained to implement these practices in the field.

In this sense, universities play a crucial role in achieving these objectives through programs, reforms and government-assisted measures whose mission is to educate, advise, train and promote spaces for socialization that strengthen science from undergraduate and graduate levels for the knowledge of innovative technologies that use the benefits of nature present in agroecosystems to increase agricultural food production.

Despite the efforts of the universities, there is still insufficient management related to food production in mountain areas, which among the possible causes is diagnosed an insufficient agroecological culture based on science, and little involvement of the Municipal University Centers (CUM) in the cultural promotion for food production, so it is a necessity, the training of university students socioculturally committed to transform the productive environment, by promoting good practices in these contexts.

This challenge requires that the University as an agent of change, from the municipality integrates new formative approaches, for agricultural production and local development; and above all for the promotion of a mountain agroecological culture that decolonizes traditionalist thinking and face the current socio-cultural problems. This invites the activation of academic and scientific forces that are still untapped potential of the municipalities. Specifically, in relation to the promotion of

mountain agroecological culture that contributes to ensure the desired food security and sovereignty.

Preliminary exploratory study carried out from the systematization of professional practices of the authors in the rural context from the university extension work in the municipality of II Frente in Santiago de Cuba, as well as the analysis of several theoretical sources, reveals as inadequacies:

- Limitations of university extension in the municipality that disfavor the preparation of its students for the promotion of the culture of efficient food production in mountainous areas.
- Inadequacies in the attention to the socio-cultural needs of community food producers in mountainous areas.

The objective is the systematization of theoretical references for the promotion of agroecological culture in university students towards local development, ensuring the understanding and contextualization of the university extension process for formative sociocultural work in mountainous areas of the municipality Segundo frente.

Development

Vocational training (Horruitiner, 2009), proposes that it should be developed considering the link between education and instruction and labor, in order to achieve the preparation of suitable personnel and to be able to conveniently meet the demands of today's society.

With respect, the formation of agroecological culture, (Altieri & Nicholls, 2020) is based on the integration of local and scientific knowledge, forming a culture that respects nature and promotes social justice. This refers to the need for an approach that combines traditional and scientific knowledge, seeking not only technical but also social solutions. However, the implementation of this integration can be complex, requiring an effective dialogue between different types of knowledge and overcoming existing prejudices in scientific and local communities.

For his part, (González, 2020) highlights that agroecology training should be a continuous process that involves the entire community, promoting collaborative and adaptive learning. This suggests proposing an inclusive and adaptive approach, which is essential for long-term sustainability. The idea of collaborative learning between the scientific and the traditional is key to building the formation of a strong agroecological culture. However, the implementation of this approach can be

challenging in mountain contexts, where communities are fragmented and there is a lack of knowledge among young farmers about this culture.

(Perez, 2023), states that the formation of agroecological culture as a set of practices and values that promote food sovereignty and community resilience. This updated spectrum figures a contextualized thought in its implementation, but it could delve further into the institutional and business barriers faced by university students when trying to implement these principles in productive environments to promote knowledge.

What has been expressed, intends to channel the work from the university extension, which is distinguished by the dynamizing character of the university-society link, for the promotion of culture in its most general conception, in such sense, university extension plays a significant role for its formative and totalizing integrality.

In Cuba, universalization as an essential part of the knowledge processes has been developed during all these years and constitutes the extension of the university and its substantive processes to the whole society through its presence in the territories, allowing to reach higher levels of equity and social justice in the elevation of the professional level of the citizens.

About this university process, there are several authors who address them: (Portero, González and Machado, 2016); he values the formative process as integrative and systemic, which is based on the cultural interaction of university work in permanent bidirectional communication with society, where the inter-university community is included.

It is necessary to point out that university extension, as a source of knowledge, integrates, within its functional approach, the other substantive processes, by taking all the accumulated culture to society, using promotion as an essential method, and strengthens the social link between the territories through the professionals who are trained there as one of the advances achieved by the Cuban revolution.

In addition, the function of university extension as a cultural expression is based on the culture of its context, of its actors, of all the institutions or organizations that integrate it. These approaches consolidate the fact that university extension is an active communicative process, of interrelation between the university and society, establishing it as a system for the integral formation and promotion of the general culture of the community, workers and students, but these theoretical conceptions, according to the methodology the term development, opposes the functionality of this

process, since the promotion of culture requires an interpretation more adjusted to professional formation.

University students should raise their skills and abilities for divergent and creative reflection for critical and self-critical evaluation, with the aim of solving professional problems that may arise, make decisions and enter flexibly to a culturally diverse and rich world, being able from their professional actions, to promote to future generations all those values that characterize peoples and nations.

It means that, due to the current environmental characteristics, the changing demands of society in terms of safe food products and the formation of more comprehensive professionals, as well as government policies to promote mountain agriculture and encourage group development of producers, should cause a change in their training to encourage production and sustainable development, formulation and evaluation of agro-ecological projects, rural development and reorganize producers.

The educational establishments, agricultural entities and the community promote a specific culture; although the University should promote the whole culture, because it assumes it within the formative process from the content, curricular and extracurricular, having as one of its missions, the cultural promotion, through the university extension process that the university students carry out in their mountainous work context.

Taking these criteria as references, it can be said that culture, from the university, is promoted through substantive processes, one of the most integrating is the extensionist already valued above, being this an aspect in which university students intend to take to fact ways to contribute to food production in the mountain communities where they perform their professional work, but we must take into account aspects of rural culture for its understanding, as one of the ways to be able to mediate in the proposed objectives.

In this aspect, rural culture can be considered an academic scenario for its visitors and settlers, due to the elements and natural systems and social patterns that it possesses, strengthening the permanent and continuous formation of the individual, it is an alternative that combines changes in aptitudes, development of values, habits and abilities from a diverse cultural universe.

Researchers such as (Rodríguez & Areas, 2011), agree that rural culture is as respectable as any other, and has been formed with the incorporation of centuries of experience, intelligence and a lot

of common sense, in addition to other elements evolved or assimilated from the outside, coming from the scientific and academic community.

Cardoza (2019), expresses a more totalizing conception of rural culture, which includes the mountain as a broader process, which serves as a guideline for this research, as rural mountain culture:

a culture of synthesis, diverse and rich, with a strong sense of natural local belonging, as well as to all human, material and spiritual production; it is characterized by its high level of identification with the mountain context and the preservation over the centuries of its main roots, customs, myths, traditions and its communicative particularities. (p. 22)

When we refer to this rural mountain culture, we highlight different organizational forms and different means of life used by rural families and communities to satisfy their needs, generate personal income for their well-being, which in their spaces involve activities of a social, cultural, environmental, political and economic nature.

Therefore, the existing relationship in the mountain context due to the strong roots in agricultural food production, is a distinctive aspect that is established between its inhabitants and the natural environment, to mediate and contribute to this traditional culture and is manifested in the communities, qualities and distinctive characteristics that they share, in relation to lifestyles, preferences, ways of relating, among others.

According to the authors, the process of formation of an agroecological culture in university students is associated with the development of the agricultural sector, and it is possible from the work of university extension in the universities, integral to the students to promote culture from the academic and face challenges related to food security and sovereignty, environmental sustainability, use of renewable energy, access to sources of financing and access to innovation and technology.

The approach to cultural promotion (Jiménez, Camejo and Rio, 2021) is based on the professional development of teachers, as a conscious and systematic process aimed at the education and continuous development of the teacher's personality. The proposed refers to systematize interactive dynamic processes in community spaces, which incorporate elements in the continuous development, through active and participatory relationships between the inhabitants and their culture.

Díaz, Galbán (2018), defends cultural promotion beyond their preparation for this work, starting from the cultural potentialities in the localities where they reside to promote them and show the value they have. As evidenced by the author, relationships are established between cultural promotion and community context, valid in the research proposal.

From the university, these definitions are analyzed with a view of relations between the processes of participation, from interventions of agents and organizations in function of the community, articulating their socializing and dynamic links with a pedagogical and productive profile, in order to fulfill and establish favorable conditions in the awareness of individuals in their cultural life. Therefore, university extension as a socializing, dynamic process is oriented towards cultural promotion.

The work of cultural promotion is concretized in the cultural promoters, who constitute the core of the experiences carried out by the system of Centers of Improvement for Culture between 2005 and 2008, taking as scenarios almost all Cuban municipalities, for emancipation, equity and social justice.

In Cuba, the definition of the profile of the Cultural Promoter in the system of culture constituted the starting point for the design and implementation of the different projects of formation of cultural roots, which in the framework of the programs of the battle of ideas that the Cuban people have led, according to the strategies of cultural development proposed and the social task assigned in the concrete conditions of the country and scenarios of action, in terms of the preservation of culture, traditions and strengthening of values (González, Abreus and Martínez).

(González, Abreus and Martínez, 2020) refer to the functions to which the cultural promoter is summoned, summarized as follows:

- Develop and promote participation in the different social spaces where they act.
- Attend to and promote the growing needs of the population through development projects.
- Promote the participation of personalities of culture, science and other areas.
- Promote education in values

Although these authors study the work of the cultural promoter in artistic education, they are assumed as a reference in the present research, resulting significant, the participation in the different social spaces and its realization through projects.

In the works consulted, there is an explicit treatment of the relationship between university extension and cultural promotion; however, there is insufficient explicit treatment of the elaboration of a community project for the formation of university students as promoters of mountain agroecological culture from the extension process and for local development.

Authors such as (Cárdenas, 2020); (Sosa *et al.*, 2020), recognize local development in their conceptualization as diverse and relative, considering it as the way to reach their social proposal and not as an objective to be achieved. Thus, different readings of local development associated, fundamentally, to Development Theories are recognized, for example:

- From the perspective of Evolutionism; the local is a negative principle to be suppressed in the name of progress.
- From the perspective of Historicism; it emphasizes the unique and specific character of each development process.
- From the perspective of Structuralism; the local is a place of reproduction of the great contradictions that the global is going through.

These considerations reveal the existence of reflective practices on its relativity and scope as a development alternative. Every development process demands the adoption of alternatives from the local, in this sense, the consultation of the work carried out by (Sosa *et al.*, 2020), which analyzes local development in its historical evolution supported by studies from the Marxist Leninist theory to the term development, was of interest, which is the philosophical basis for the analysis that follows and which assumes the following as general features:

- Social development is supported by the development of the productive forces.
- It is necessary to perceive the dialectical relations generated between the productive forces and production relations.
- The perspective offered by the conception of development stands out for its integrity.
- It facilitates the articulation to achieve the study of the theme of local development.

These authors relate the local with the socio-territorial, based on various criteria, but do not specify the specific functions of the cultural promoter in this context, while (Cárdenas, 2020) focuses on the conceptualization of local development.

The position of (Hernández, 2012) is taken into account, which, when characterizing local development, does so from the CUMs and their role as knowledge managers, that author recognizes the problems identified by the Municipal University Centers in the local development of Cuban

municipalities and the need for training oriented to social needs in all local actors. These ideas are taken into account as a reference, essentially, those that emphasize the role of the CUMs and their guiding character in the face of social needs.

Conclusions

In the literature consulted, it is evident that the research results around the university extension process are extensive, however, no reference was found that particularizes university students as promoters of mountain agroecological culture for local development, which, in this research, is connoted as a fundamental moment. Therefore, the theoretical analysis carried out allows us to arrive at the existence of the following theoretical inconsistencies.

The theoretical reductionism of the extensionist process and its socio-cultural function, contribute to the detriment of its procedural character, as well as the tendency to the decontextualization of its formative demands.

The conceptual inconsistencies in relation to the features of the mountain agroecological culture, in this respect, there are no ways for its promotion from the university extension in this career of the CUM, limiting its integrating and totalizing character as a substantive process.

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