

Rethinking Territorial Social Responsibility Today: Comparing, Cooperating, and Rehumanizing from the Individual

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Currently, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Latin America and the Caribbean face the need to respond to the social challenges of the region by comparing different experiences, practices, and methodologies of responsible action in the territory. Through Comparative Benchmarking Studies, oriented not to compete but to cooperate, HEIs can advance in their responsible management of diversity, valuing not the homogeneity of university models, but the richness of each institution in specific contexts, while seeking convergence within the complexity and balanced management of conflict.

Diversity, complexity, and conflict require a systemic approach that can transcend social responsibility models such as impact management, which, because of their link with perspectives originating in the company and the market, sustain a fragmented approach to social responsibility. Beyond impact management, the responsible action of each institution is part of a Transformative Systemic Approach that contributes to the learning and mutual transformation of the social actors of the territory. This constructive interdependence relationship, in which each institution participates autonomously, constitutes a potential that can be evaluated based on their contribution to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDOs).¹

Given the complexity of the challenges faced by the HEIs in the region, it is worth presenting—as an initial approach sequence—the articulation among SDOs 17, 4, and 16: partnerships to achieve these objectives; quality education; peace, justice, and strong institutions. This means, initially (SDO 17), evaluating the responsible performance of each

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>

university from the perspective of the valuing convergence present in the partnerships between different actors.

On the other hand, it implies enriching the concept of quality education (SDO 4) by overcoming the vision of quality as a product, linked to market conception, towards an approach to quality as an interactive and consensual process of re-humanization centered on the individual. It opens up the possibility of valuing ethical quality together with education for equity, inclusion and democratic citizenship.

In addition, through the contribution to peace, justice, and solid institutions (SDO 16), progress can be made in human development and the construction of a deliberately defined common good; this is achieved within the context of a dynamic in which the territory begins by being its own body and grows in a spiral to encompass the social and the ecological dimension.

The territory thus understood is the effective space for the realization of the person, from the material to the dimension of meaning. Rethinking education is, for HEIs and especially for universities, to assume their social debt, at the same time as their commitment and social projection: the result is the theoretical, practical, and methodological expansion of university social responsibility and its advance as Territorial Social Responsibility.