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Spirituality and service: impact on the graduates'
education

3.13

Texts extracted from Volume 3 of the Uniservitate Collection:
Spirituality and Higher Education: Perspectives from Service-Learning

Uniservitate Collection

Coordination of Uniservitate Program: María Rosa Tapia

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Design of the collection and of this volume: Adrián Goldfrid

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Spirituality and Higher Education: Perspectives from Service-Learning / María Nieves Tapia ... [et al.] ; adaptado por Karina Marconi ; M. Alejandra Linares ; coordinación general de María Nieves Tapia ; M. Beatriz Isola ; Laura Gherlone. - 1a ed adaptada. - Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires : CLAYSS, 2022. Libro digital, PDF - (Uniservitate)

Archivo Digital: [descarga](#)

Traducción de: Karina Marconi ; M. Alejandra Linares.

ISBN 978-987-4487-30-8

1. Trabajo Solidario. 2. Pedagogía. 3. Espiritualidad. I. Tapia, María Nieves II. Marconi, Karina, adapt. III. Linares, M. Alejandra, adapt. IV. Tapia, María Nieves, coord. V. Isola, M. Beatriz, coord. VI. Gherlone, Laura, coord. VII. Marconi, Karina, trad. VIII. Linares, M. Alejandra, trad.

CDD 370

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13. SPIRITUALITY AND SERVICE: IMPACT ON THE GRADUATES' EDUCATION

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Abstract

Every Catholic university, based on the preferences of the Gospel, is called to foster the academic excellence necessary to solve the real problems that affect its social context. The universities entrusted to the Society of Jesus share this mission and conception of academic quality and, particularly in Latin America, in recent decades have been generating initiatives aimed at training students for engagement and solidarity. Under the institutionalization of the University Social Responsibility (RSU) paradigm, the Jesuit universities in the region have stimulated the promotion of experiential experiences of approaching social reality and of service to the community through internships and participation in social projects, to encourage the response capacity of future professionals in the face of current problems, committing themselves creatively and constructively from an exercise of citizenship, democracy and ethical leadership to build a fairer society.

In light of this background, and based on advances in doctoral studies developed around the perceptual evaluation of the impact of the social projection policy of the Catholic University of Córdoba (Argentina) on graduates, this chapter seeks to account for the impact of these options and institutional actions regarding the training and profile of its graduates. To do this, the proposed analysis is supported by qualitative studies based on documentary analysis, in-depth and semi-structured interviews with graduates and employers, both of which are key references in assessing the impact of the training that is meant to be promoted.

54 Association of Jesuits Universities Entrusted to the Society of Jesus in Latin America. The Network is composed of 30 Jesuit universities. Its mission is to develop common projects in accordance with strategic regional priorities, to seek a greater contribution from higher education institutions to their societies. See: <https://www.ausjal.org/>

Introduction: academic quality and university mission

Defining the term 'quality' in higher education requires explaining the different ideological and pedagogical options that an institution assumes as a paradigm. It is based on these options that the dimensions and lines of work, the instrumental resources and the tools for monitoring and quality assurance are then defined. Every concept of quality is thus associated with an ideal to be achieved and does not exist in isolation from a particular mission.

Taking Harvey and Green (1993) as a reference, different conceptions of quality in higher education can be identified. The traditional notion associates quality with an exceptional phenomenon. It implies surpassing high standards and is identified with components of excellence, where the material and human resources that allow achieving the best results or products are essential. This notion assumes distinction, exclusiveness, elitism and, to a great extent, an aspect that is inaccessible to the majority.

There is another notion of quality, associated with perfection or coherence, where — more than products— it is important to guarantee processes that favour the good performance of things, without any monitoring of the results. This conception links quality to the achievement of purposes, its outlook is functional and there is a temptation to address particular demands or needs (market, family aspirations, etc.) that must be met.

In turn, as a cost-value relationship, quality requires universities to emphasize costs and economic efficiency of the means put at their disposal. Effectiveness implies a strong focus on measurable results, which encourages individualism and competition for available resources.

However, there is another notion, little explored and stimulated, linked to the idea of educational quality as the one that produces changes and enrichment in the participants of the educational process: students, professors, as well as external stakeholders, where the educational experience enriches the knowledge, skills and of transformation abilities (qualitative change).

From contributions like those of Harvey and Burrows (1992), this approach implies empowering students and other participants to influence their progress, involving them in the decision-making process that affects their transformation.

As Pope Francis expresses in his address to the participants of the Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education, held in Vatican City on 20th February 2020:

The fascinating world of education, which is never a repetitive action, but the art of growth, of maturation, and for this reason, it is never the same... It is a peculiar kind of movement, with characteristics that make it a dynamism of growth, aimed at the full development of the person in his/her individual and social dimension (Pope Francis, 2020).

An educational institution of excellence is the one that has the greatest impact or adds the most value to the integral development of students and stakeholders involved. This integral education involves promoting a process that ensures the acquisition of significant knowledge and the capacity building that allow university students to see themselves immersed in a social reality where they take an active role, and in which they act not only as experts in knowledge in a specific field but also as competent citizens committed to the humanising and sustainable transformation of their culture.

From this perspective, an educational institution of excellence is the one that has the greatest impact or adds the most value to the integral development of students and stakeholders involved. This integral education involves promoting a process that ensures the acquisition of significant knowledge and the capacity building that allow university students to see themselves immersed in a social reality where they take an active role, and in which they act not only as experts in knowledge in a specific field but also as competent citizens committed to the humanising and sustainable transformation of their culture.

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The questions are: what is the idea of quality needs to be promoted to fulfil what university mission? And in light of this, what mission are we called to in terms of the challenges of the context? Without delving into them, any idea of quality can be wrong and even contradict the objectives to be achieved.

As Carrizo explains (2006):

The university, as an institution that produces knowledge and shapes opinion and trends, has an unquestionable social responsibility. Perhaps its priority task today should be to think about itself, explaining the conditions in which it builds knowledge, trains professionals and conceives the human condition to know and act. The strategic position of the university within a society always calls it to responsibility (p.5).⁵⁵

55 Own translation.

In Catholic universities, this task takes on a deeper dimension.

The mission of the university is to train talents to care and transform... It is a hopeful future for themselves, while they prepare to fully incorporate themselves into the organizational, business and institutional instances through which the dream of a longed-for region will be forged.....e soul and meaning of the personal and institutional option (of the university) is the quality of the spiritual experience of the members of the educational community and the allies with whom we want to collaborate in the care of the regional values and heritage, and in overcoming challenges, imbalances and problems (Aguilar, 2021, pp.7-8).⁵⁶

From this mission and facing the particular contexts of insertion, the main concepts of quality training are associated with the promotion of:

- ▶ engaged and relevant research (intellectual apostolate as the exclusive social mission of the university);
- ▶ active pedagogies (students' protagonist role);
- ▶ significant and relevant knowledge (integration between teaching-social projection/service-learning);
- ▶ active citizenship (recovery of the civic dimension, horizontal solidarity and advocacy);
- ▶ and critical reflection (critical and transformative thinking)

Faced with these challenges, Jesuit universities, in the range of Catholic universities, are called

to serve society (from its university specificity) to transform it, to contribute to making it fairer and more governable, with opportunities and quality of life for all, achievable with personal effort (AUSJAL, 2001, p.13).⁵⁷

The Common Educational Project of the educational institutions of the Society of Jesus in Latin America (CPAL, in Spanish, 2005) highlights the “impact on society and public policies” as one of the key objectives to fulfil its mission. In turn, the 2011-2017 strategic plan emphasizes the need

to support universities to try to make a qualitative leap in strengthening their Christian identity with Ignatian charism, so that they can fulfil their mission of educating men and women “for and with others” and to produce and spread knowledge and technology that contribute to the creation of a more humane, just and sustainable world (AUSJAL, 2011, p.11).⁵⁸

56 Own translation.

57 Own translation.

58 Own translation.

The words spoken by Father General Peter Hans Kolvenbach (2000) clearly establish the vocation of Jesuit universities in terms of responsibility towards society. The superior general says:

Every Jesuit academy of higher learning is called to live in a social reality... and to live for that social reality, to shed university intelligence upon it and to use university influence to transform it. Thus Jesuit universities have stronger and different reasons, than many other academic and research institutions, for addressing the actual world as it unjustly exists and for helping to reshape it in the light of the Gospel (p.11).

Clarifying this mission, it is not difficult to find the notion of educational quality and innovation that we should promote and that should characterise us: that which is measured by the capacity for personal and social transformation. Under this notion, all means are aimed at perfecting and achieving the higher purpose of being a transformative university. The effort to improve must be made, then, in search of integral education as a process that ensures the acquisition of significant knowledge and the capacity building that enables university students to transform themselves and, together with others, the context they are part of.

For some universities, the object of their existence is academic excellence. *We consider that the reason for our existence is service to people and academic excellence, its best tool* (EDUSOL, 2006, p. 11).⁵⁹

University Social Responsibility (USR) and professional profile

As mentioned above, every Catholic university, based on preferences of the Gospel, is called to foster the academic excellence necessary to solve the real problems that affect its social context.

The universities entrusted to the Society of Jesus share this mission and conception of academic quality and, particularly in Latin America, in recent decades have been generating initiatives aimed at training students for engagement and solidarity.

By adopting the paradigm of University Social Responsibility (USR), Jesuit universities in Latin America promote experiential experiences to approach social reality and service. They are carried out through internships and participation in social projects, which seek to encourage the skills and competencies of future professionals in the face of current problems. Along with this, creative and constructive commitment is encouraged from a civic, democratic and ethical leadership exercise in the construction of a sustainable and fairer society.

⁵⁹ Own translation.

University Social Responsibility is understood as

the ability and effectiveness of the university to respond to the transformation needs of the society in which it is immersed, through the exercise of its substantial functions: teaching, research, outreach and internal management. These functions must be encouraged by the search for the promotion of justice, solidarity and social equity through the construction of successful responses to meet the challenges involved in promoting sustainable human development.

For this reason, University Social Responsibility must be a cross-cutting feature of the work of AUSJAL universities. Therefore, university authorities must guarantee coherence between university management and the planning and implementation of Social Responsibility actions in the substantial functions mentioned so that they are effective (RSU-AUSJAL Network, 2014, p.15).⁶⁰

The distinctive feature of the Social Responsibility work of the universities of the Society of Jesus is that they place their assets and knowledge at the service of society, especially the poorest.

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Specifically, the encouragement of such experiences leads our students to strengthen what Vallaes (2006) calls the three pillars of ethical education:

- ▶ Conscious emotion or enlightened motivation, which leads to feeling concerned and responsible for distant, systemic problems, only perceptible through reflection and specialised information;
- ▶ *critical reflection or argumentation, which allows to argue well and recognise good arguments to know what to do in certain complex areas of modern life, which implies the integration of a whole series of scientific knowledge and management of complex contexts. It also implies managing dialogue as an essential tool for ethical search and consensus (training in participatory democratic life, in citizen life).*
- ▶ *and action or entrepreneurship, which trains professionals capable of designing and participating in collective actions with various institutional participants in the solution of specific ethical problems, which implies teamwork*

60 Own translation.

and human relations skills, inter-institutional organisational management and management of interdisciplinarity (p.17).⁶¹

Particularly at the Catholic University of Córdoba (UCC), and motivated by the four reasons that characterise what is known as the Ledesma-Kolvenbach educational paradigm (*utilitas, iustitia, humanitas* and *fides*), the intended or desired professional is described as men and women of science, awareness and engagement (Álvarez, 2014).

Utilitas provides people with advantages for practical life and is associated with the need and usefulness of education for the good performance of certain professions. It is not enough for Jesuit universities to transmit instrumental rationality alone. When this happens exclusively, education easily drifts towards injustice and exclusion, since it accumulates knowledge, assets and powers for the better-off, who, in turn, are hired by those who have the most, to defend their interests. Hence, the other three motivations mentioned above, which the Society of Jesus has tried to incorporate, are required in this education.

Through *iustitia*, it is intended that students contribute to a citizenry educated in democracy and public responsibility, with the ability to participate, to promote equal opportunities and to voluntarily opt for public action committed to the common good. This mature notion of justice transcends individual actions and includes working for the transformation of socio-cultural structures since these structures are the ones that provide the basis for the existing political and economic structures. This transformation stems from the theological concept of reconciliation with God, with our brothers and with creation. Based on the concern for ecology as part of the mission, the promotion of justice also includes the commitment to care for the common home.

Humanitas aspires to the elevation of the human being. It seeks for the person to flourish by promoting profoundly human values, such as compassion, modesty, temperance, wisdom, fortitude, working for a better life for all human beings and promoting the well-being of other living beings and the planet as a whole. Today we understand that this motivation has, therefore, a horizon of integrality for the human person and universality concerning humanity as a whole. In a world where a large number of people are excluded for various reasons, humanism recognises the equal dignity of every human being. For this reason, it activates instruments and means that provide dignity and human development to all people without falling into false welfarism.

Originally understood as the “defence and propagation of the faith”, *fides* nowadays leads to offering students an experience of transcendence, with the possibility of open-

⁶¹ Own translation.

ing up to God as the ultimate goal. The faith proposed should be the faith of love for one's neighbour, which rejects religion as a tool of denial, exclusion and discrimination of those who are different. At the same time, it should give grounds for hope to the poorest.

Social outreach, service and impact on graduate education⁶²

Social outreach is a university function of knowledge transfer to society, which at the Catholic University of Córdoba (UCC) is based on an educational paradigm that promotes an associative and multidisciplinary academic model, committed to the creation and exchange of knowledge in close relationship with the different social partners, and in which the functions of teaching, research and internal management are integrated.

Accordingly, it is not understood as a mere extension function or service provision, but as a scaffolding for the co-production of relevant solutions based on functional integration of different knowledge.

The Catholic University of Córdoba, as part of AUSJAL and according to the postulates of the aforementioned University Social Responsibility (USR) policy, has institutionalised a policy of social projection since 2011, understood as the process of

*systematic and active participation of the university in the sustainable human development of the community of which it is a part ... promoting co-production between different stakeholders and knowledge towards quality knowledge and relevance in terms of association, to promote progress, create social capital, integrate the students' education with external reality, and function as an interlocutor in the solution of problems (RSU-AUSJAL Network, 2014, p.18).*⁶³

The task of training professionals, sensitive to reality and in the right mind to transform it transcends the mere disciplinary and technical training. It implies carefully implementing a training policy that makes it possible to develop sensitivity towards the environment, especially directed towards the most disadvantaged stakeholders so that graduates are essentially aware, competent, committed and compassionate (Ugalde, 2012).

⁶² This section is based on the contributions of the following work: Giraudo-Rollán et al., 2019.

⁶³ Own translation

The task of training professionals, sensitive to reality and in the right mind to transform it transcends the mere disciplinary and technical training. It implies carefully implementing a training policy that makes it possible to develop sensitivity towards the environment, especially directed towards the most disadvantaged stakeholders so that graduates are essentially aware, competent, committed and compassionate.

Under this policy, many social outreach initiatives have been developed to date⁶⁴. Methodologies such as service-learning have a privileged place in those initiatives due to their potential as a contribution to the desired training.

However, given such an important option and commitment, it is worth asking what impact the social projection policy under the University Social Responsibility approach adopted by the Catholic University of Córdoba has on graduate training. How do graduates and external references perceive this impact; how can this effectiveness or impact on the profile of graduates be accounted for (evaluated)? These questions are central not only to this work but also to account for the impact of these institutional options and actions on the graduate's training and profile.

jection policy under the University Social Responsibility approach adopted by the Catholic University of Córdoba has on graduate training. How do graduates and external references perceive this impact; how can this effectiveness or impact on the profile of graduates be accounted for (evaluated)? These questions are central not only to this work but also to account for the impact of these institutional options and actions on the graduate's training and profile.

The impact of social projection in the training process of graduates: methodological option for its evaluation⁶⁵

During the period 2018-2021, and as a doctoral dissertation in process⁶⁶, it was proposed to provide methodological tools that would allow correlating educational processes according to the social projection policy proposed at the university (with a specific focus on the Faculty of Chemical Sciences), concerning the training and profile achieved in its graduates.

To this end, it was decided to follow an interpretative, retrospective and cross-sectional analytical approach, developed through a qualitative methodological design, and structured around the conducting and critical analysis of in-depth interviews with graduates,

64 Biannual curricular projection projects with curricular connections, special projects, projects focused on the welfare of the internal community, stable social projection programmes, management support projects, and other activities such as public policy advocacy and participation in networks. See [in Spanish]: <https://www.ucc.edu.ar/archivos/documentos/SPyRSU/2020/rsu-ucc-reporte-2019-ok.pdf>

65 This section is based on the contributions of the following work: Giraudo-Gargantini, 2019.

66 Giraudo, F. (ongoing).

employers and authorities of professional associations (who are responsible for the control of the ethical performance of the profession).

The population under study was made up of graduates of the faculty who did their undergraduate course from the implementation of the institutional policy of social projection (Rectoral Resolution No. 1092/2011), which was adopted from 2012, in the courses of Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, until and including 2018.

To create the sample, a purposive and theoretical sampling technique was used to ensure plural representativeness, so that the cohort of graduates of both degree programmes could be included in the sample, as long as the definition given and the data provided were consistent.

As a control group, a sample of graduates from cohorts before the implementation of the institutional policy of social projection was provided using the same criteria. In this sense, it was initially proposed to consider cohorts before 2012, taking the proximal contemporaneity of the participants (age/period of study) as a criterion for selection, trying to minimize biases due to issues related to age, customs and the perception of the interviewees. In both cases, the number of interviews was subject to field saturation.

Concerning the references external to the university (key informants) they were employers of both groups of graduates to obtain a correlation between the analysis and the references from deontological institutions, considering the ethical and social performance of the graduates from the professional group in the practice of their professions. Employers are considered to be key points of reference to provide a perspective on professional performance, considering skills that go beyond the technical disciplines. The representatives of the professional associations (deontological level) were also considered and were able to provide reliable data on the professional ethical performance of graduates since the Disciplinary Courts are set up as collegiate bodies that judge this behaviour of professionals in their practice.

Beyond the diversity of analytical procedures available in the qualitative methodology, content analysis was followed through a spiral dynamic in which data from different sources were combined, obtained and analysed. Based on the data obtained, the grounded theory approach was followed (Glaser-Strauss, 1967) where data collection and analysis are carried out simultaneously. Interpretations of the data were supported by systematic coding.

Briefly, the research was carried out in four stages.

In the first stage, the desired scope of the training of graduates of the Faculty of Chemical Sciences was determined through the institutional policy of social projection of the Catholic University of Córdoba (UCC). To this end, an in-depth investigation was carried out through a documentary analysis about the educational paradigm, training and pedagogy in the institutions of the Society of Jesus, as well as its foundations and implementation strategies of the social projection policy adopted during the period 2012-2018, focusing on the Faculty of Chemical Sciences, to define the scope of this policy in the training process of the academic unit and the impact it seeks to achieve in its graduates. Based on this analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with those responsible for the institutional management of the period under study (chancellor and vice-chancellors of the university, management representatives of the Faculty of Chemical Sciences, heads of the areas involved in the Vice Chancellorship for Academic Affairs) to define the dimensions, categories of analysis and indicators that would allow addressing the survey with the graduates.

The perceptions of the graduates of the Faculty of Chemical Sciences regarding the university's social projection policy and its impact on their training were analysed using a problem sample and a control group, and this stage constituted the core of the research.

Finally, to achieve consistency in the results of the research, which focused on the perception of graduates, the assessment of external references (employers and representatives of deontological institutions) were analysed concerning the training and professional profile of the graduates of Chemical Sciences at the Catholic University of Córdoba.

By way of summary, the first two stages of the research allowed findings to be interrelated through documentary research, the testimonies of the institutional references and what was established in the social projection policy, whose impact is meant to measure. In this sense, the approach of the concept of social outreach adopted by the university and the objectives proposed through the institutional policy sought to promote the understanding of the effects of its application in two categories:

α. On the one hand, how the university relates to the community and its surroundings or area of influence, under the tenets of active involvement in concrete experiences, bidirectional association, co-production of knowledge, creation of multidisciplinary learning communities and real contribution addressing preferably the most disadvantaged stakeholders of the social fabric (see Table 1).

Table 1. Categories and dimensions of analysis of the university-community link through the social projection policy.

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	DIMENSIONS OF ANALYSIS
University-commu- nity link	Participation	Quality
		With active involvement
		Concrete and direct activities
		Real contribution
		Preference for disadvantaged sectors
		Problem-solving
	Co-production of knowledge	University-community association
		Bidirectional knowledge
		Cross-sector collaboration
		Learning community
		Multidiscipline
		Institutional synergy

Source: Giraudó, F. (ongoing).

b. The second category is related to the effects of the policy on future graduates, according to the educational paradigm adopted. This second consideration supposes the identification of both objective and perceptual properties, referred to:

- ▶ the external or impact or impact on the environment, with consequences at the socio-environmental level and on public policies;
- ▶ the internal impact or the transformation of the individual, with effects on personal and academic-professional training (see Table 2).

Table 2. Categories and dimensions of analysis of the impact of the outreach policy on graduates from the Catholic University of Córdoba (UCC)

CATEGORÍA	SUB-CATEGORIES	DIMENSIONS OF ANALYSIS	OBJECTIVE PROPERTIES	PERCEPTUAL PROPERTIES
External impact	Transformation of the socio-environmental reality	Citizen qualities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax culture and fulfilment of work duties. • Influence of the UCC's social projection and training policy on this aspect.
		Socio-environmental engagement	Social, sustainable actions or projects promoted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive solutions achieved. • Self-perception of environmental and social commitment.
			Actions carried out in favour of the promotion of justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal meaning of the word "justice." • Understanding the concept of promotion of justice explained in the Social Outreach Policy. • Self-perception of actor and leader.
			Actions in favour of the environment promoted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of university education on actions linked to socio-environmental engagement.
	Ethical practice of the profession	Absence of deontological sanctions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the Code of Ethics of professional practice. • Ethical conception of professional practice. 	
		Participation and/or contributions to public policies	Leadership positions held in public or private institutions for the public good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions that have had an impact on the agenda of state or private-public welfare institutions. • Personal reflection on the importance of participation in public policy.
Internal impact	Personal/human training	Values education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale of personal values. • Idea associated with the notion of "good person" • Scale of professional values. • Idea associated with the notion of "successful professional"
		Critical recognition of the reality and the profession		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social problems linked to the profession, visualised as a subject of attention. • Social problems linked to the profession, feasible to be solved from their professional practice.
	Academic and professional training	Discipline competence	Average graduation rate and years of study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal consideration of their academic/professional preparation/competence. • Level of job placement (time/position/institution).
	Personal transformation	Life experience	Participation during their training period in experiential experiences of contact with the social reality/ Type of experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy that this participation has had on future professional and life choices/options. • Moments/experiences from the degree course that you remember as mobilising. • Moments/experiences from the degree course that you still put into practice today. • Moments/experiences from the degree course that you would like to deepen in future graduates.
		Critical reflection		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training aspects that stand out as being of greatest value throughout his career.
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences throughout their career that allowed them to develop the ability to critically reflect on social and professional reality.

Source: Giraudó, F. (ongoing).

Instruments were designed to evaluate the perception of the Faculty's graduates regarding the training impact received concerning the social projection policy, as well as the perception of external references (employers and references from deontological institutions) from their experience with the graduates. The main conclusions drawn from this systematisation are set out below.

Based on these theoretical categories, instruments were designed to evaluate the perception of the Faculty's graduates regarding the training impact received concerning the social projection policy, as well as the perception of external references (employers and references from deontological institutions) from their experience with the gradu-

ates. The main conclusions drawn from this systematisation are set out below.

Results obtained: the graduate that we were able to build

Based on the methodology described to answer the questions raised by the research, it is possible to make a series of statements about the impact of the social projection policy on the graduates of the Catholic University of Córdoba (particularly those of the Faculty of Chemicals Sciences).

Regarding the external impact, it is possible to conclude as follow:

- ▶ **Citizenry qualities:** the experiences of social projection have not been mentioned as a factor influencing the development and fostering of citizenry qualities in graduates. The contribution of the university in cultivating a way of thinking and reflecting is highlighted, but the citizenry qualities and civic duty are correlated to the family training received and experienced, as well as to the individual and his or her convictions.
- ▶ **Socio-environmental commitment:** the experiences of social outreach show great influence on the understanding of/adherence to concepts of social engagement and promotion of justice, understood under the proposed training paradigm. However, there is an important link between this understanding and the disciplinary subjects proposed, the role and testimony of educators throughout the stimulated pedagogical process, and the subjects of the Training Area (philosophy, anthropology, theology, ethics). All this constitutes the scaffolding for the comprehensive training of the

graduate, this training being highlighted and perceived by all external references as the causes that promote the social commitment acquired. However, the social projection policy does not seem to have a decisive influence on the implementation of initiatives linked to environmental commitment, given the nature of the experiences offered.

- ▶ **Ethical practice of the profession:** university graduates do not have deontological sanctions for breaches of the Code of Professional Ethics, and the external references state that the prevalence of these sanctions is lower than in graduates from other universities. Concerning the ethical performance of the profession, these references highlight the fact that the graduates from the Catholic University of Córdoba (UCC) have distinctive elements inherent to the training process they have experienced. They indicate that the main strength that distinguishes them is related to the comprehensive training they receive, without specifying details about their probable causes. A high percentage of the employers interviewed stated that the ethics put into practice when practising the profession were more evident than in other graduates. The causes of the training process that graduates highlight as influential are linked to the specific disciplinary field, the good examples set by their professors, the subjects of the Training Area and the pre-professional internships. The initiatives promoted under the social projection policy do not seem to have any influence on this dimension from the perception recorded.
- ▶ **Advocacy in public policies:** the importance attributed to this dimension by the graduates interviewed is high. Almost half of them have had some kind of experience in this regard and state that the main stimulus for doing so is related to the conviction of the individual, the education received through university disciplinary training and the sensitivity towards the environment, experienced in professional practice. Social projection initiatives are not explicitly mentioned among the factors promoting this quality.
- ▶ **Vocational motivation:** as an emerging aspect and not stated in its objectives, the social projection policy influenced the stimulation of motivational aspects in almost half of the graduates interviewed. According to the research carried out, this motivation in the analysed sample was related to teaching under different modalities and degrees of formality, as a tool to achieve the greatest good in professional objectives.
- ▶ **Impact at the academic level:** a greater significance of this impact stands out when community services are linked to disciplinary learning processes. This link is virtuous not only to understand the contents but also in terms of the skills acquired for future professional life, since they affect them personally, allowing them to glimpse horizons of meaning. Along with this, an

emerging aspect linked to scientific production became evident: some of the graduates interviewed carried out their final degree course work on the experiences of social projection, carrying out applied research projects based on them, with a high level of involvement in the community.

- ▶ **Labour influence:** it is recognized that the social projection policy influences the development of skills valued by employers when selecting professionals for a job. Outreach experiences contribute directly to obtaining these skills or competences that are not linked to strictly academic training.

Concerning the internal or personal impact on graduates, following the implementation of the outreach policy, it is possible to conclude that:

- ▶ **Values education:** there is an agreement between the graduates and the external references when it comes to indicating the main attributes and values experienced. Honesty - both on a personal level and when practising the profession -, empathy, love of others, ethics in professional practice, solidarity and tolerance are highlighted to a greater extent. The external referents found these values to a greater extent than in other graduates. With regard to the assessment of the influence received in terms of values education, all the interviewees point to two causes: first, the convictions and beliefs of the individual, together with their training and family support throughout life. Second, the university education received. In this sense, the institutional ethos takes precedence, together with the subjects of the Training

All graduates who took part in social outreach experiences indicated these experiences as the main factor in their encounter with social reality and as inputs for the critical analysis of reality. All of them positively valued its completion as part of the training process, indicating that they bring the reality of professional practice closer, consolidate the knowledge acquired and foster opportunities to develop sensitivity towards the environment and community needs in the target areas.

Area addressing specific topics of application in personal and professional life, and the example and testimony of professors in the specific disciplinary field. The graduates do not perceive a marked influence of the social outreach policy in this dimension, with greater recognition by external references.

- ▶ **Critical acknowledgement of reality and the profession:** in this dimension the importance of the social outreach policy is evident. All graduates who took part in social outreach experiences indicated these experiences as the main factor in their encounter with social reality and as inputs for the critical analysis of reality. All of them positively valued its completion as part of the training process, indicating that they bring the reality of professional practice closer, consolidate the knowledge acquired and foster opportunities to develop sensitivity towards the environment and community needs in the target areas. The pre-professional internships in the different target areas were also mentioned in this regard.

In relation to the external perception of this quality in the graduates, external references indicate that it is an attribute present in all cases, to a greater extent than in graduates from other universities.

- ▶ **Academic and professional training:** all the graduates interviewed expressed their agreement with the academic training received in the specific disciplinary area and highlighted the comprehensive training provided by the university, valuing positively the subjects of the Training Area and the curriculum design. composition of the syllabuses.

Consequently, employers pointed out that the comprehensive training process is a distinctive feature of the graduates, which is noticeable when it comes to practicing the profession. Together with this, it was pointed out that social outreach experiences improve the learning processes, as they are linked in terms of curriculum, and favour disciplinary competence when practicing the profession.

- ▶ **Experiential experience:** graduates who have participated in social outreach experiences have a vivid memory of them and all of them value their participation and their curricular involvement positively. These experiences enabled them to relate their future professional role to reality, to discover realities different from their own, to reaffirm personal and professional values, and to better learn the disciplinary contents by being able to apply them. They have influenced their participation as professionals in the places where they have been inserted or influenced the decisions they have made. However, for most of them, these have not been the most significant experiences of their university career, but those linked to the specific disciplinary field, according to their particular interests, and those significant on an emotional level (beginning of pre-professional internships, last subject, presentation of the Degree Final Project, among others).
- ▶ **Critical reflection:** according to the records, the social projection policy plays a significant role in the possibility of critically reflecting on reality to act

lucidly and produce changes in it. This capacity is also recognized by external references interviewed in a higher proportion than in graduates from other universities.

- ▶ **Vocational motivation:** following the actions described through the external impact analysis, there must be an internal motivation so that it can finally be translated into actions.

Motivation for teaching, both formal and informal, is one of the emerging aspects that social outreach experiences have generated in graduates.

Concluding Reflections

After the research, the findings on the impact achieved by the social outreach policy under the University Social Responsibility approach adopted by the Catholic University of Córdoba (UCC) on graduate education, show that the social outreach policy and experiences have a great influence. This is evident in the understanding of the concepts of social commitment, and the promotion of justice understood from the educational paradigm promoted by the Society of Jesus. In addition, it is evidenced in the academic impacts that improve learning, as well as in the stimulation of applied scientific production; in the impact on public policies and the development of skills for the professional insertion of graduates.

Likewise, the promoted social outreach policy generates stimuli at the vocational level, reaffirms personal and professional values, allows an encounter with social reality and favours the recognition and critical analysis of reality. It is thus manifested in the high level of influence on the decisions and participation of graduates in the personal and professional fields. These assets and values are also highlighted by external agents and employers, as distinctive features of the professional profile stimulated.

However, their development and impact become meaningful and profound when combined with other important factors, such as the nature of the academic proposals offered in the disciplinary field, the role and testimony of professors throughout the pedagogical process stimulated, the subjects on the training area taught, and the institutional ethos or the way of experiencing the university during the years of study.

Along with this, the research carried out has also highlighted the need to take care in the selection of service-learning experiences promoted, based on the themes and values that are to be promoted (for example, respect for the common home or public policy advocacy) making these choices explicit. Similarly, it is necessary to awaken and

support the development of a personal emotion-spirituality associated with the proposed experiential experiences, to make them meaningful beyond the technical-disciplinary or social aspects.

There is a synergistic relationship between social outreach and service-learning experiences and the consolidation or strengthening of this institutional culture that should not be overlooked... Certain institutional objectives set out in the social outreach policy should be reviewed to make these options explicit at both a value and instrumental level. If this is not promoted and implemented, the multiplicities of experiences of liaison with society will be simple placebos that prevent us, like Catholic universities, from fulfilling in depth the mission that has been entrusted to us.

These dimensions and options are closely linked to an institutional spirituality, a way of life, customs, norms and institutional options that make up an organisational culture and a specific training proposal, consistent with the tenets and values to be promoted. Here there is a synergistic relationship between social outreach and service-learning experiences and the consolidation or strengthening of this institutional culture that should not be overlooked. This feedback constitutes the basis for fruitful practices

that contribute to the promotion of highly trained, conscious, prophetically critical, compassionate and committed professionals to processes that transform structures.

Given this, although no contradictions were found between the findings of the documentary research on the Ignatian educational paradigm implemented and the different actors involved (which accounts for a coherence between ideology, policies, processes or procedures and results achieved). According to the results of the research carried out, certain institutional objectives set out in the social outreach policy at the Catholic University of Córdoba (UCC) should be reviewed to make these options explicit at both a value and instrumental level.

If this is not promoted and implemented, the multiplicities of experiences of liaison with society will be simple placebos that prevent us, like Catholic universities, from fulfilling in depth the mission that has been entrusted to us.

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Pope Francis

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A research topic that is increasingly attracting the attention of the academic world is the link between teaching and spirituality, understood in its broadest sense. This will be the focus of the volume that we present to our readers today. The aim is to provide, both for Catholic Institutions of Higher Education and universities at large, a space for reflection in their itinerary of discernment about their identity and specific mission.

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ISBN 978-987-4487-30-8



9 789874 448730

Published in June 2022

ISBN 978-987-4487-28-5