

Letter from the Director

Ignacio Restrepo Abondano

We have not known before the counter of the university rectors systematic education reform Project at the national government. It will be a staple, not only for a possible modification of the formal proposal, but to the necessary discussions to be presented at the Congress, when it comes to reforming Act 30 of 1992. What we do know are the main points of opposition to the project, at least from the part of the rectors of the public universities, which as in all these cases become independent spokespersons, whether be the ASCUN the natural body that should present criteria unified whole Colombian university establishment.

The high point of discussion is in private capital inflows to the universities, not only to advance a particular project, as we do but to agree a partnership that means an investment that would be rentable for universities and for the capitalist. As stated by Minister of Education, the private sector “from getting into his pocket, put money to develop knowledge, selling services and earn money.”

For the rectos, this system is not acceptable, because it may conflict with the mission and “the true function of the university” on the one hand, and secondly, the profit probably will be at the expense of quality education. To substantiate his view, to the example of Brazil, where this system has amazingly increased the coverage, it is said that this experiment shows very little quality in education.

And to elaborate on arguments, since this system would require greater supervision of the State, it is said that then would jeopardized “university autonomy”. And we mean the autonomy of public universities because in the private (at least academically) virtually non-existent anymore, despite being enshrined in the famous 1991 Constitution.

The fundamental argument of the Minister of Education is very simple: the State does not have enough money to meet the aspirations and demands of public universities, despite the annual increasing at least until 2019. Just that money does not exist. And therefore, it is necessary for universities to find alternative revenue sources, including private capital investment is a good solution.

Faced with this impasse, we can formulate the following questions:

- 1) Is the private sector in Colombia willing to risk significant capital in a public company, such as these universities, knowing the history of rejection and, therefore, public disorder that occurs between students and teachers at the thought of private investment?
- 2) Does the possible contradiction between the solution offered and ‘mission and the true function “of the university is an obvious contradiction, or simply to find loopholes to avoid facing the reality of the situation?

3) Is it true that profit and quality are mutually exclusive? And is it true that the Brazilian university level, with private investment, is deeply deteriorated?

4) And finally we come to the horse fight “autonomy” in the public university. We have hard and frequent experiences of what means autonomy for university students: Brokeback to the legitimate forces of the State before the throwing, destruction of public goods, teargas cannisters and Molotov cocktails. Even without these extreme reluctance to situations such as accreditation. Is it raises an issue of principle here between the state and shaken public universities as a whole, where students, teachers and administrators are in full agreement?

Answers will be in the legislative field, which should settle arguments and deliver a solution that would see the vital future of higher education in Colombia. Either way we expect