

## Quality of Higher Education, a Regression in Critical Training: The Case of the Autonomous University of Guerrero

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**Abstract:** The current models of higher education in Mexico and several countries have adopted accreditation of performance standards as a way of ensuring quality in education and graduation processes. The labor and business markets, due to their competitive environment, use requirements of this type to identify the best elements of human capital to be incorporated into their instrumental processes. To meet the demand for a trained workforce that acts efficiently in this globalized and highly competitive world, universities make changes that promote vocational training to the detriment of critical values.

This study presents an analysis of the historical path of the Autonomous University of Guerrero (Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero or UAGro); an institution that has played a leading role in political scenarios, championing popular causes of democratic openness and social justice from the 1960s to the 1980s, but that since the early 1990s, has been immersed in a gradual process of increasing the quality of education in accordance with national policies. Thanks to its constant evolution and renewal over the last decades, the UAGro has managed to establish itself as a university with educational models that support competent education and instrumental rationality. In this context, the objective of this work is focused on determining the stages of academic development through which the institution has undergone, and in analyzing its contribution in the formation of critical subjects in the perspective of its development as an institution of educational quality.

Among the main conclusions reached, is that the UAGro focuses its efforts on ensuring quality education to respond to the requirements of the current neoliberal scenarios, and at the same time, maintains its university-people project to promote and monitor democratic life in favor of social inclusion, much in need in the State of Guerrero, which has many shortages of resources.

**Key words:** education policy; educational quality; critical values

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### 1. Introduction

To achieve the socio-economic development of a country and its regions, education is a primary factor that provides the person with the necessary knowledge that allows him/her to be inserted into productive activity with efficiency in such a way that it results in strengthening the collective well-being.

In the last five decades, as events in the economic sphere of our country were taking place, relevant facts that

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defined the course of higher education were also unfolding. The policies generated by the State to synchronize national development printed a neoliberal nuance in educational activity which imposed a model based primarily on *instrumental rationality*.

Higher education in our country has shifted from a planning State model, between the late 1970s and early 1980s, to an evaluating State in the late 1980s; a role that has been consolidated in our days (Mendoza, 2002). Within the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior or ANUIES), actions began to generalize the practice of higher education planning with the implementation of the National System for The Permanent Planning of Higher Education (Sistema Nacional para la Planeación Permanente de la Educación Superior or SINAPPES) in 1978, which led to the creation of the National Coordination for higher education planning (Coordinación Nacional para la Planeación de la Educación Superior or CONPES) integrated into its executive board by officials of the Ministry of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública or SEP) and the ANUIES itself.

At the beginning of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado's six-year presidential term, the post-oil economic crisis would limit the availability of resources for projects and development plans that, for the first time, were officially formulated through the enactment of the Planning Law passed by Congress in 1982, which mandated the planning of all matters of public interest for the benefit of development in accordance with the country's socioeconomic needs (Federal Executive Branch, 1983). In the field of education, on August 15, 1984, the National Program of Education, Culture, Recreation and Sports was presented, which established the strategies formulated by the public administration for the educational sector as a whole.

Months before, the National Program for the Development of Higher Education (Programa Nacional de Desarrollo de la Educación Superior or PRONAES) is presented within the ANUIES, and approved by the Board of Rectors in February 1984. This program would establish the guidelines for the development of higher education from the point of view of universities. From the beginning, PRONAES was a failed plan due to the economic crisis, and the lack of consensus in its previous formulation; this generated the need to design a new program agreed upon by the actors of SEP and ANUIES (Mendoza, 2002).

The Comprehensive Program for the Development of Higher Education (Programa Integral de Desarrollo de la Educación Superior or PROIDES) was approved within the ANUIES in 1986. It is a program with broader objectives that takes into account positions not only of the CONPES, but also of the Regional Councils for the Planning of Higher Education (Consejos Regionales para la Planeación de la Educación Superior or CORPES) and the State Commissions for the Planning of Higher Education (Comisiones Estatales para la Planeación de la Educación Superior or COEPES), and addresses specific needs with a view to *greater efficiency in expenditure and budget allocation*. This last point will be the trigger for managing scarce resources based on merits obtained by the institutions, and will result in the creation in 1989, of the National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education (Comisión Nacional de Evaluación de la Educación Superior or CONAEVA), emulating evaluation models from other countries.

With the aim of producing satisfactory changes for the concretion of a *higherquality* education, the CONAEVA established external evaluation of educational programs through academic peers, creating for this purpose the Interinstitutional Committees for the Evaluation of Higher Education (Comités Interinstitucionales para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior or CIEES) in 1991. In our country this type of evaluation had been a norm among scientific communities, mainly in the fields of research and graduate studies, but it had not been a practice in bachelor's degree programs (Mendoza, 2003).

With the creation of the CONAEVA, the State becomes an evaluator of higher education, but not as a function of the federal public administration through its governing body for education, but as an integration of private organizations created by self-sustaining academic peers. It should be noted that in other countries, the evaluation of higher education is underpinned by law, with a legal basis that establishes the obligation to exercise it. In our country, this evaluation is not mandatory for universities and institutes supported by public resources; however, achieving accreditation implies official recognition that brings with it extraordinary subsidies for educational programs, and projects and plans to expand enrolment.

In the private higher education sector, which has been very dynamic in the last three decades due to its coverage of enrollment and educational programs, an organization called the Federation of Private Mexican Higher Education Institutions (Federación de Instituciones Particulares Mexicanas de Educación Superior or FIMPES) was also created. It grants recognition, through accreditation mechanisms, to institutions that have achieved a level of educational quality.

The Autonomous University of Guerrero (Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero or UAGro), a public institution that operates with public resources granted by the state and federal governments in the form of budget allocation, has gone through these events derived from public policies in higher education, and established by international and national organizations (UNESCO, OECD, WORLD BANK and others) which have shaped the scenario of higher education in Mexico.

Since its inception on April 1, 1960 (UAGro, 2014), the UAGro has experienced each of the stages of higher education development in the country. In the 1970s, the governments of Presidents Luis Echeverría Álvarez and José López Portillo were characterized by its constant growth; in the mid-1980s, under the presidency of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, the UAGro suffered from the withholding of the subsidy that caused one of the worst crises in its history; in the late 1980s, a transformation process emerged aimed at consolidating academic work in accordance with the proposals of the ANUIES to transform the university into a modern and quality institution.

The First and Second University General Congresses (Congreso General Universitario or CGU) held in the 1990s, that attempted to implement reforms in the UAGro, their resolutions found much resistance to institutional change and did not cause considerable impact on university life. It was not until the Third University General Congress in 2000, during Florentino Cruz Ramírez's term as rector, that several resolutions were adopted to modernize the substantive activities, and homologate the organization and work with other universities in the country in compliance with the approaches of the UNIES.

The evaluation and accreditation processes of the educational programs and Academic Units, as well as the teaching and research work, will be the constant from this year on, and the UAGro will seek to establish itself as an educational quality institution. In this context of constant evolution with significant progress in different aspects, the following questions arise: How has the UAGro managed to insert itself and remain through these events as an institution that has traditionally formed critical subjects, but that, as a result of international and national trends, adopts educational models that promote competent education and instrumental rationality?

## **2. Objective**

To determine the stages of academic development of the Autonomous University of Guerrero, analyzing its contribution in the formation of critical subjects and the perspectives of its development as an institution of educational quality.

### 3. Development

As the leading institution of higher and senior high school education in the state of Guerrero, the UAGro has been immersed in events that have defined its existence throughout its almost six decades of history.

It was created in a context of political confrontation with the government represented by General Raúl Caballero Aburto (1957-1961), and played a determining role in joining the movement of social struggle that would culminate in the fall of the governor on January 4, 1961, six days after the massacre executed by Mexican army troops of an undetermined number of citizens who protested the situation in the center of the capital of the state of Guerrero. As a result of this struggle, the university obtained its autonomy as one of the demands presented in the 1961 protests, which would become a decisive achievement in the model of critical and emancipatory university. The former candidate for rector of the UAGro, Rafael Aréstegui Ruiz, in an article published in the newspaper *La Jornada Guerrero* on January 25, 2007, expresses in this regard:

In the absence of opposition parties or human rights organizations, the Guerrero State University became the voice of the persecuted, and a rector elected by the university community had two options: represent the university people facing a repressive government or keep an accomplice silence.

#### 3.1 The University-people Project

In February 1972, Rector Jaime Castrejón Díez, resigned from the position derived from his kidnapping in November 1971 by Genaro Vázquez Rojas' guerrilla groups (UAG, 2010, pp. 35-36). On May 4, 1972, Dr. Rosalío Wences Reza took office as Rector, after a campaign supported by a group of university professors and students who envisioned a radical change in the institution's educational policy. In a document of the political campaign as a candidate for the rectorship, and signed by Wences Reza, he points out:

This university has to give way to the university-people in which academic and research work is complemented by close contact with the society that gives it life. The university-people will no longer be an elitist institution because it should not be a few elements of the people who arrive with sacrifices in the university classrooms, but the university must go to the people and attract them to its bosom. This is how society will benefit even more from its higher institutions; and university students will be able to put at the service of the popular masses the knowledge they acquire, at the same time in a practical way to improve themselves professionally (Dávalos, 1999, p. 94).

In this regard, Rafael Aréstegui Ruiz, in his opinion article of the newspaper *La Jornada Guerrero* on January 25, 2007, referred to the project as follows:

The Autonomous University of Guerrero [...] in addition to becoming more massive, acquired a popular character like no other public university in the country. The experience of university-people was then lived: for the first time the children of the peasants were able to access university studies and remain in the institution thanks to the opening of student homes and university dining halls, and the extension of services such as medical offices and free legal law firms to the population of scarce resources provided the university with unseen popular support.

In an interview with professor Arturo Miranda Ramírez, Principal of the Academic Unit of Education Sciences, and a historical university leader, we addressed the background in the UAGro's academic and curricular projects, and regarding the decade of the seventies he pointed out the following:

... the South American thought brought to Mexico primarily by exiles who fled dictatorships in South America strengthened the critical formation in the UAG...

This Latin American thought brought to the heart of the university the ideas of Paulo Freire (1921-1997) in the sense of seeing pedagogy as a practice of freedom, educating the illiterate to become aware of the conditions of the yoke within repressive and freedom-limiting governments, and understanding that education leads to that path (Freire, 2011). It was urgent to avoid reproducing in the classrooms the social conditions that perpetuated the same elitist scenarios in which the child of the powerful is educated, and the son of the peasant and worker has little or no opportunity to get a university education.

The priority of meeting social demands, which were precarious when public universities were being developed, required them to play the role of institutions that spoke up for them. Alvarez and González point out that “the development of the modern system of public higher education in Mexico has been social and political in nature, rather than academic in the strict sense” (1998, p. 56).

### **3.2 The Financial Crisis in the UAGro: Withholding the Financial Subsidy**

The aspirations raised in the university-people project suffer a setback in the early 1980s, resulting from the withholding of the federal subsidy and the decrease in the effective economic amount earmarked for the operation of the UAGro. By 1984, the expenditure for higher education went from 22% to 17%, resulting in a sharp reduction in funding to universities (Lopez, 1996).

As a result of the economic crisis of 1982, the SEP, through the Undersecretary of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Subsecretaría de Educación Superior e Investigación Científica or SESIC) in coordination with the ANUIES, presented the National Higher Education Program (Nacional de Educación Superior or PRONAES) which followed the guidelines of the National Development Plan 1983-1988 aimed to improve the provision of educational service (Mendoza, 2002). In relation to this issue, the National Program for Education, Culture, Recreation and Sports (Programa Nacional de Educación, Cultura, Recreación y Deporte or PRONAECD) 1984-1988 stated that:

In the allocation of financial resources, criteria will be established to stimulate efforts in favor of quality and efficiency, and the correspondence between the funds granted and the results obtained will be evaluated (Poder Ejecutivo Federal, 1984, p. 48).

An orientation towards quality and efficiency in academic work was already being developed in the federal government. The Ministry of Public Education (SEP), during the mandate of Jesus Reyes Heróles (1982-1985), requested universities to implement systems for evaluating and planning academic activity and the efficient use of financial resources. It is precisely these requirements that would lead to the withholding of the financial subsidy to UAGro in 1984 (UAG, 2010, pp. 364-367; Miranda, 2013, pp. 234-247). During the mandate of Rector Enrique González Ruiz (1981-1984), the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), together with the ANUIES, “announced the withholding of the subsidy with the condition that an external audit would be carried out, and once the results were known, the delivery of the subsidy would be considered” (UAG, 2010, p. 365), because it was presumed that the resources granted by the federal and state educational authorities were mismanaged. There was resistance on the part of the UAGro authorities to allow the external audit; it was even considered a flagrant meddling in internal affairs and an affront to university autonomy insofar as the institution had people capable of managing finances and planning academic activities (Miranda, 2013).

On April 7, 1984, in a premature resumption, Dr. Rosalío Wences Reza took office as rector for a third term. Dr. Wences led the negotiations to obtain the subsidy again. After a long and complicated negotiation, the university administration signed an agreement on January 8, 1985, in which it accepted a series of conditions to

regularize relations with government authorities. “These conditions include: concentration of the 38 high schools in 14 regional campuses, the closure of the university dining halls and student homes, the closure of the law firms, the extinction of the Higher Normal School (Escuela Normal Superior) and the closure of XEUAG” (UAG, 2010, p. 366). There is even a summary of the agreement signed between the federal education authority, the ANUIES and the UAGro (Miranda, 2013, pp. 238-243).

The neutralization of the university-people project by the budgetary and planning policies of the SEP, deprived the institution of its identity as a promoter of an education for all. A new stage began, a transformation that would gradually change over the years, the move to an institution that would seek a selection of students through academic skills tests to occupy spaces in its classrooms, a reduction in enrollment by the recommendation of evaluating and accrediting bodies, and gradually, an institution more oriented to academic work.

### 3.3 Institutional Change Processes at the UAGro

During the term of Rector Gabino Olea Campos, from April to September 1994, the Administration Committee of the CIEES carried out an Evaluation of the Administrative Functions to determine the conditions of administrative operation, and issue a series of recommendations for its improvement. The document presented at the end of that visit was the Administrative Functions Evaluation Report of the Autonomous University of Guerrero (CIEES, 1994).

The most important recommendations for the analysis are:

- **Second recommendation:** to make a profound change in university legislation.
- **Sixth recommendation:** to adapt the integration of the university council by balancing the representation of the university community (incorporating researchers and faculty directors).
- **Eighth recommendation:** to review the mechanisms and procedures for the election of the rector, as well as his or her duration in office.
- **Nineteenth recommendation:** to define the Academic Model of the university.
- **Twenty-first recommendation:** the new Academic Model must conceive the attention to the students as the fundamental reason for the existence of the UAGro.
- **Twenty-third recommendation:** to establish profiles for the careers offered by the UAGro, according to the specific needs of the state in the first place, and of the country in the second term.
- **Twenty-fifth recommendation:** to design and undertake a program of administrative modernization, whose fundamental lines of action derive from the recommended Academic Model.
- **Twenty-ninth recommendation:** to define and apply as soon as possible an accounting system that ensures the agile, efficient and transparent management of financial resources.

All the previous recommendations implied the formulation of a new model of University, more in line with a globalized context and of insertion into the competitive labor market.

It was not until Florentino Cruz Ramírez's term as rector (1999-2002) that the idea of a change of direction began to grow in a committed way. In July 2000, the General Commission for University Reform (Comisión General de Reforma Universitaria or CGRU) produces and presents the book “La urgente transformación de la Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero: propuesta central para la discusión” (UAG, 2000b). It describes the necessary changes that had to be carried out to adapt the institution to the environment of globalization. It is worth mentioning that the creation of the CGRU was a recommendation of the CIEES to configure the changes with the participation of specialists, among which were notable academics and researchers of the UAGro, and an advisor of

the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México or UNAM), Dr. Axel Didriksson. The recommendations drawn up by the CIEES in 1994 are practically taken up again, to which some forms of organizational structure are added to adapt the UAGro's substantive and administrative function to new times.

The aforementioned book was used as a document for discussion that would serve as a prelude to the Third General University Congress that was held on December 6, 7 and 8, 2000. The main approved changes are as follows:

- 1) Change in the academic model.
- 2) Relevance of the academic programs offered by the University.
- 3) An academic structure organized in a network.
- 4) Constitution of the institutional planning and evaluation system.
- 5) Regarding the governance model, the election of the Rector and the governing bodies.

One of the most significant changes proposed by the CIEES in 1994 to achieve a stable academic work was to homologate elections of university authorities, as well as to extend their work periods to consolidate academic projects. The terms of the rector and directors would be extended to four years, and the elections would be held in the same year, beginning in 2002; this would ensure that the projects of the various university authorities have sufficient time to consolidate. The election of the rector and directors of academic units was proposed with "universal, secret and equal voting by sector: students and workers. The parity vote will be obtained by weighting (averaging) the percentage that each candidate obtains in the two sectors. The two percentages are added together and averaged" (UAG, 2000b, p. 114). Finally, this was not approved in the Third General University Congress; what they approved was "by consensus, the universal, direct, secret, free, and unrestricted vote of any kind" (UAG, 2000, p. 52) and the possibility of the weighted vote was eliminated.

### **3.4 The Fourth General University Congress**

On February 23 and 24, 2012, the Fourth General University Congress (CGU) was held during the administration of Rector Ascencio Villegas Arrizón (2010-2012). The most important agreements reached are mainly related to the modification of the UAGro's Educational and Academic Model, as well as the academic organizational structure and the criteria for student admission and permanence.

#### **3.4.1 Educational and Academic Model (Modelo Educativo y Académico or MEyA).**

In the agreements of the Third CGU, training by competencies was mentioned only timidly; the concept did not completely permeate higher education policies. President Vicente Fox's National Development Plan 2001-2006 warned of the need to link knowledge to the field of work. "The rigidity of many higher education programs makes it difficult to move between the fields of study and work, which restricts opportunities for lifelong learning" (Poder Ejecutivo Federal, 2001, p. 62).

For the Fourth CGU, the concept of competency training was already understood and defined in its scope, and is therefore presented as a proposal to be implemented in the UAGro's educational programs. The new Educational Model published in 2013 states that although the meaning of the term competence is connotative or diverse, this Educational Model recognizes it as the ability of the person to mobilize and integrate cognitive, metacognitive, interpersonal, and computer or technological resources to solve responsibly problematic situations that arise on a daily basis. This capability is the result of the conjunction of the domains of learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together (UAG, 2013, p. 52).

The proposal at the Fourth CGU, in addition to including competency training, pointed to the need to consider *social inclusion* as a specific measure to reverse the educational exclusion that accompanies the quality education processes outlined in the theoretical framework of this work. The approved text states that the institution must “evaluate and update the UAGro Educational and Academic Model within the framework of the new state, national and international context and its trends in higher and senior high school education, developing the competency-based and inclusion approach ...” (UAG, 2012b, p. 46).

Javier Saldaña Almazán’s mandate as rector deals in depth with these guidelines in the Educational Model of 2013, emphasizing the attention to indigenous students to be trained in the classrooms of the institution, and to contribute, once their higher education is concluded, to the development of the marginalized regions from where they come. This initiative is strengthened by the regionalization of higher education through the creation of several university campuses in marginalized regions in the State of Guerrero (Costa Chica, La Montaña, Costa Grande), so that this proposal came before the University Council to dedicate 10% of the enrollment exclusively to students of indigenous origin.

#### 3.4.2 Criteria for Admission and Permanence of Students.

At this point, the resolutions of the Fourth CGU ratify the criteria and instruments of the student selection process, in order to meet the requirements of a quality education, standardizing the process to all the academic units and educational programs in the different regions of the state.

The drafting of this resolution states that the Autonomous University of Guerrero will adopt a generalized and unified policy “of admission to higher education, through a process of student selection that, taking into consideration the demands for higher education of the Guerrero State’s youth, privileges academic criteria and the application of transparent and reliable procedures” (UAG, 2012b, p. 23).

The instruments and criteria for the selection process will be the following:

- 1) To consider 7.0 as the minimum final high school average for pre-registration.
- 2) To accept the result of the CENEVAL exam as an academic evaluation criterion for as long as the institution does not have a reliable and nationally recognized alternative.

This implies that applicants can access a file or pre-registration to receive the opportunity to take the selection exam, but without guaranteeing the admission of students with low academic average, who in many cases, are high school graduates from the UAGro.

A diagnosis included in the National Development Plan 2012-2018 indicates that higher education coverage in the country in 2012 was 29.2% of the 18-22 age group. Expressed in practical terms, only 3 out of every 10 applicants access higher education (Poder Ejecutivo Federal, 2012). The numbers in the state of Guerrero during the period 2010-2011 were lower; the coverage in higher education was 14.9% (Poder Ejecutivo Federal, 2011, p. 36). With these criteria and selection tools, only those percentages of applicants at the national and state level have the possibility of entering universities, and education is limited to attending the students with the highest academic performance, who in most cases also have high economic resources to finance their preparation.

The exclusion of students with medium and low academic performance and economically disadvantaged is a painful reality for our society. Thus, 7 out of 10 young people between the ages of 18 and 22 at the national level, and 8.5 young people at the state level seek positions in the labor market without having college education.

#### 3.4.3 Academic Organizational Structure.

By the year 2012, the projects for the regionalization of higher education began to develop with the creation of new educational programs on campuses in the state regions of la Montaña, la Costa Chica and Acapulco. Those



in Acapulco that currently operate in their own facilities will have to move to larger ones in order to meet the criteria of the CIEES and maintain the levels of good quality educational programs.

The resolution of the Fourth CGU points out that the UAGro needs to ratify and implement the agreements reached at the Third CGU to adopt a structure in academic networks to diversify the “possibilities of integration [...] by regional multidisciplinary areas of knowledge or by fields of professional practice, and also, in the context of the revision of the Educational and Academic Model, to analyze the relevance of the Colegios” (UAG, 2012, p. 26). In other words, the structure is similar to what was agreed in the Third CGU, but the organization of the academies in the regional campuses is extended, and the relevance of the Colegios is judged due to their little or no functionality in the work of the UAGro.

### **3.5 The Fifth General University Congress**

During the administration of Rector Javier Saldaña Almazán (2013-2016), the Fifth General University Congress was held, on October 2 and 3, 2015. Important proposals were approved for strengthening the quality of education and complying with recommendations of the CIEES.

Practically the recommendations of the CIEES of 1994 have been fulfilled with observable changes. Even with subsequent modifications to the criteria for evaluating higher education institutions, some other requirements have been added. The most significant case is the internationalization of academic research, and administrative activities of higher education institutions. This point is discussed below.

Among the activities of the Fifth CGU, several issues were discussed, such as changes in the nomenclature of educational centers, the selection process of applicants to enter the university, and the election of single-person university authorities.

#### **3.5.1 Changes in the Nomenclatures of Educational Centers.**

Prior to the agreements approved by the Third CGU, the UAGro’s educational centers had names such as schools (which did not offer postgraduate programs), faculties (with academic programs of specialty, master and/or doctorate), institutes or centers (specialized research activities and even dissemination of such research). After the Third CGU, the nomenclatures changed to Academic Units (regardless of whether they offered graduate programs or not), to work in networks and in turn establish Colegios, that were the compilation of Academic Units with accredited or related work in the disciplines or areas of knowledge. In the Fifth CGU, the original nomenclature of schools, faculties, institutes and centers is used again. And they will form an academy for each educational program.

#### **3.5.2 Selection Process of Applicants to Enter the Educational Programs**

To counteract the recurrent street demonstrations after annual selection processes by students rejected mainly from the health education programs (medicine, nursing and dentistry), the process had to be made transparent. As indicated in the agreements, the wording was as follows:

The process of selection and admission to the UAGro’s bachelor’s degrees will be characterized by

- 1) Its transparency, credibility and effectiveness, but above all, to ensure the entry of the best applicants;
- 2) To provide an opportunity for the applicant to have two or more admission options, in case he/she does not get the minimum score required by the respective educational program;
- 3) To provide access to pre-registration to applicants with a minimum average of 7, to give them the opportunity to compete for admission to the UAGro;
- 4) Evaluate the possibility of substituting the CENEVAL exam with another one equal or better that

guarantees an adequate selection of applicants (UAG, 2015b, pp. 1-2).

It should be mentioned that there is not yet a proposal for a selection instrument to substitute the CENEVAL exam, but the agreements indicate that its replacement should be evaluated.

### 3.5.3 Election of Single-Person University Authorities

For the second time, it was proposed that the election of the rector and the directors of the academic units be with weighted vote (50% workers and 50% students), however the proposal did not materialize; it remained as it was in the Law of the University and in the Statute. The election procedure established by the Statute and the respective Electoral Regulations (UAGro, 2015, p. 117) was as follows:

The Rector will be democratically elected through a broad, participatory and transparent process of the university community [...]. He or she shall serve for four years and may be re-elected only once, under the terms set forth in the General Statute. The University Community, in full use of its rights, shall elect the Rector of the UAGro every four years, by relative majority, through: Option a) The universal, direct, secret and free vote of students and workers; Option b) The weighted vote: 50% students and 50% workers.

By an overwhelming majority of all the discussion tables installed during the Fifth CGU, it was approved that the vote be universal, direct, secret and free of students and workers. For the second time, the recommendation of the CIEES for the election of single-person university authorities (rector and directors of academic units) was not complied with.

## 3.6 The Perspective at the UAGro: Academic Internationalization

During the Second World Higher Education Conference held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France from July 5 to 8, 2009, several guidelines were approved for the development of higher education in the countries affiliated to this organization. One of the points discussed was the internationalization of higher education; essentially, the term refers to ensuring that tertiary education institutions conduct and promote academic exchanges of research and links with institutions in other countries, including students, teachers, administrative and managerial staff.

The conference's outcome document indicates that higher education institutions worldwide have a social responsibility to contribute to reducing the development gap by increasing the transfer of knowledge across borders, particularly to developing countries, and to try to find common solutions to promote the flow of skills and mitigate the negative impact of brain drain (UNESCO, 2009, p. 4). Actions to achieve the above result in "joint research initiatives and student and teacher exchanges that promote international cooperation. Stimuli for broader and more balanced academic mobility should be incorporated into mechanisms that ensure genuine multilateral and multicultural collaboration" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 5).

The methodology used by the CIEES for the Self-Assessment of Higher Education Institutions in 2014, establishes the criteria that must be accredited to obtain recognition as good quality institutions. Internationalization is an essential point, and the document describes the elements necessary to achieve it (CIEES, 2014, pp. 38-43). Among the criteria are:

- 1) Institutional policies and strategies for the internationalization of teaching.
- 2) Institutional policies and strategies for the internationalization of research.
- 3) Institutional policies and strategies for the internationalization of extension.
- 4) Institutional policies and strategies for the institutionalization of internationalization programs.
- 5) Institutional policies and strategies for the collaboration of the administration in internationalization.

As a result of the resolutions of the Fifth CGU, the law of the Autonomous University of Guerrero was amended and presented as a proposal and subsequently passed by the Congress of the State of Guerrero on March 8, 2016. Derived from the above, the new Statute of the UAGro was approved by the Honorable University Council in extraordinary session on June 3, 2016 in the city of Acapulco. During the presentation of the Statute by Dr. Ramón Reyes Carreto, coordinator of the Fifth CGU, he emphasized that internationalization is a necessary process for the advancement of the UAGro as a good quality institution.

The UAGro Institutional Development Plan 2013-2017 addresses the issues of internationalization, regionalization and globalization as key elements of the institution's development, in which international networks and associations play a strategic role. "The role of networks and associations should, in this perspective: (a) promote national capacity-building, (b) promote international cooperation and (c) strengthen mutual understanding and a culture of peace" (UAGro, 2013b, p. 27). These activities are required to be carried out by the teachers in their academic bodies and by the students in their possibilities of international academic exchange. With all of the above, the UAGro has the normative and academic elements to realize its internationalization. This being one of the primary objectives to raise the quality of the education provided, it is possible to realize its achievement.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The information presented in this analysis allows to have an overview of the most momentous events that have occurred in the different stages of development that the UAGro has gone through from its foundation to the present day. The 1960s were characterized by being the period of its creation and social struggle for autonomy. During the 1970s, there was a stage of setting up university identity as an institution with social inclusion. Subsequently, in the 1980s, its growth was constrained by the post-oil economic crisis that led the country to a severe decrease in the availability of resources; a difficult situation that caused the UAGro to stop receiving the subsidy from the government. In the 1990s, the CIES and the SEP issued a number of recommendations aimed at raising the quality of education; a project that initially generated little interest, but was later seen as a valuable commitment. All the recommendations were implemented with the exception of the issue of the processes for the election of the rector and the directors by weighted vote.

The Educational Model published in 2013, in addition to including competency training for labor market insertion, stresses the need to consider social inclusion as a specific measure to reverse educational exclusion. To prevent the weakening of the university-people project, decisions were made to strengthen the regionalization of higher education. One was the creation of several university campuses in different marginalized regions of the state of Guerrero (Costa Chica, La Montaña and Costa Grande), and another was the automatic and unrestricted admission of 10% of enrollment to students of indigenous origin. To these measures, student homes (for low-income students who cannot afford to pay rent), university dining halls (with low-cost food), food scholarships and scholarships for exemption from registration fees, medical services and legal services were added. Two years later, during the Fifth General University Congress of 2015, other proposals were approved, among which the process of internationalization of academic, research and administrative activities of higher education institutions stands out.

Through this process of constant evolution and adaptation, the UAGro has managed to remain as an institution that focuses its efforts on achieving educational and administrative quality and obtaining certifications

granted by evaluating agencies. This fulfils the primary task of providing relevant and contextualized higher education that contributes to the economic and social development of the entity, forming men and women ethically committed to promoting a better welfare for all, while meeting the requirements to obtain funding. The UAGro's operating model seeks to be in line with the globalized context and labor market needs, but also has its doors open to the popular masses, thus fostering quality education and social inclusion.

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