

Presentation

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND education within a university setting implies establishing procedures that may on an ongoing basis encourage interdisciplinary academic work guidelines in both these areas. The predominance of organizational design and assessment criteria favoring individual work with a marked disciplinary emphasis generally imprint an innovative quality on the interdisciplinary process.

Ongoing updating highlights knowledge's dynamic quality which based on the principle of dialogue allows for an understanding of the consolidation of interdisciplinary approaches as a transformative drive in search of legitimating their deep roots in university life. These approaches may even become part of the university's tradition, without being an expression of a conservative force that curbs the university's mission of fostering social development as a cultural project.

This transformative condition goes hand in hand with the characteristics universities have acquired historically through the reforms implemented in order to critically and creatively comply with its functions, such as autonomy, research and academic freedom, the creation of collegiate structures and the strengthening of their representativity, among others. Interdisciplinary research and education are attributed a significant role in social transformation owing to their capacity to study social issues in their full complexity and foster critical consciousness by being linked to integral academic training.

The institutionalization of knowledge creation from an interdisciplinary perspective implies creating conditions to make it possible for innovation, flexibility, openness, re-conceptualization, cooperation and creativity to be effectively encouraged at the university, as opposed to the predominance of individualism, competition, homogeneity, exclusion, preeminence, hierarchization and territoriality.

This issue of **INTER**disciplina presents various experiences of interdisciplinary research institutionalization at universities throughout the American continent. The section entitled "Voces cardinales" (*Cardinal voices*) includes a thought-provoking contribution from the Australian National University.

This issue entitled *Inter_instituciones* (*Inter_institutions*) alludes to the interinstitutional process, but in terms of specific historical-cultural contexts that give shape to a broad spectrum of forms of organizing academic work and their regulatory frameworks. At the same time, they express notions of

knowledge integration forged by interdisciplinary bodies and projects since these perspectives are intimately associated with such a context. Institutional agreements thus emerge that draw on different perspectives of what interdisciplinary work is, that articulate knowledge and practices based on thematic axes, social issues both at a local or national scale or fields of knowledge, among other criteria.

The successful strategies shared through the vast interdisciplinary experiences presented in this issue's dossier can favor institutional learning. This may promote knowledge integration processes in the study of social reality in its full complexity within the field of the university's substantial work.

A second meaning of the term *Inter_institutions* relates to the fact that interinstitutional processes may favor interinstitutional collaboration both nationally and internationally in order to set up joint projects with the support and value demanded by long-term intellectual challenges. ■