EDITORIAL: The contribution of universities

By: CubaSí Editorial Staff
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Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez has insisted, in recent meetings and working visits, on the need of a greater contribution from universities to the Cuban society and economy. He refers, basically, to the efficient usage and implementation of the results obtained from scientific researches or innovations developed in higher education institutions.

This is one of the goals of universities, beyond the training of professionals. Universities cannot be viewed as self-sufficient, elitist entities, detached from the comprehensive development of the nation. Curricula themselves should take into consideration the context peculiarities, their problems and challenges. They are sometimes considered, but this relation does not always work both ways. The government, institutions, enterprises, and other organizations should capitalize more the concrete contribution of universities and thus, involve them and even make them implementers in an increasingly number of projects with great economic and social impact.

Moreover, universities should be responsible for the development and monitoring of much more specific strategies of development in all fields.

And we do not need to sit and wait for the university to take an interest in these actions. We need to get the university involved. We need to offer adequate spaces for fostering research. We need to take closer looks to the outcomes and thus contribute with the implementation of programs.

It is a responsibility for the different government agencies and enterprises comprising all sectors of the economy.

We have reached the point that a certain enterprise has tackled a problem with the help of a nearby university: the lack of dialogue and lack of fluid working relations have sometimes undermined the agreement.

The academy has to feed from the practice in the field and vice versa. The experience of the academy has to be exploited. We need to integrate it to production routines.

The President has also pointed out the existing imbalance between the professional growth of university's personnel and that of the personnel working in institutions linked to production. The majority of PhDs only work in academia. More highly-qualified workers are needed in enterprises and other working centers.

And that must be a priority for decision-makers, regardless of the personal interest of each worker.

Cuba treasures a comprehensive system of higher education institutions, spread all over the country. There are working relations with other universities across world. Research papers on a wide range of subjects are being conducted. We need to socialize this knowledge. The university must do it by breaking lingering internal barriers. All of the society must be involved. Knowledge must contribute with the development of the project for achieving a thriving and sustainable society.

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