



# *The postgraduate at UNAN-Managua and its relationship with Nicaraguan society II: implications*

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## ABSTRACT

This article summarizes in a synthetic and objective way the second part<sup>1</sup> of the documentary analysis that has the following objectives: a) to explain the performance of the postgraduate studies of UNAN-Managua and its relationship with the national reality, specifically with: Government institutions, the private company and the community, those that are linked to the substantive functions of the university declared in its statutes and, b) present the challenges (goals achieved and goals to be achieved) and the implications that this has in this sub-level for the future of The university and the country in general. The current description of the postgraduate can be done from several dimensions that are directly related to its work. The knowledge of these happens to perceive the social impact of the postgraduate course developed in the university as well as possible. Therefore, it is necessary to explicitly explain and objectify its performance and its relationship with the national reality in accordance with the axes: relationship with the Government institutions, relationship with the private company and relationship with the community.

1. In this second part of the study, the references of the first part are maintained, so that the reader is clear about the idea that it is a single study divided into two parts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This second part of the documentary study exposes in a synthetic and objective way the challenges (goals achieved and goals to be achieved) and the implications that the postgraduate has for the future of the university and the country in general.

The main conclusions reached with the first part of the study, which was entitled “The postgraduate at UNAN-Managua and its relationship with Nicaraguan society I: history and current affairs” were: a) the postgraduate at UNAN- Managua begins a new stage –consolidation and modernization– oriented to the ordering and development of research and innovation, b) in order to obtain added value of the knowledge produced, it is necessary to measure the impact of the research carried out and explore the feasibility of developing other areas, c) the integration of teaching and research is necessary to increase its effect on degree and national reality and d) there is a need to develop self-evaluation processes for programs, in all their categories.

These conclusions show positive implications in the medium and long term: a) in the organization of the university, with a new postgraduate structure that takes advantage of the current vision, but which will prepare the basis for further transformation in the next five years, b) in decision making, in order to achieve an advanced institution in the different fields of knowledge where it has strengths, and assume new challenges in areas - in which there is little or no experience - in which you can invest and Finally, c) in relation to the Human Development Plan, the following will be improved: the level of training in the different educational subsystems, the scientific and productive generation of the country, the ability to solve problems at different levels, finally, the level of life, not only of graduates, but of the general population.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study is a documentary investigation with a historical perspective. The approach to develop the study was qualitative. The content analysis of different documents related to institutional management was realized, in which specific data on the postgraduate work is presented. In addition, documents from national specialists and international institutions were taken into account as theoretical references that support some approaches and findings.

The information gathering techniques were: the bibliographic review, the checklist and the comparison. With the documentary review, the tracking and location of the bibliographic sources that provided the data for the study was achieved. The checklist (containing the categories of analysis sought in each document), was used to classify the reports according to the time periods in which they were prepared, which allowed the reconstruction of two stages: initial and diffuse expansion.

The comparison allowed the analysis of the findings in relation to the theoretical perspectives addressed. Another dimension, which allowed to develop this technique, was the coherence between the data and the narrative that was configured from the descriptions found in the different reports on the object of study.

With the application of each of the techniques, the data obtained reflected significant aspects for the understanding of the postgraduate work in both its historical and current dimensions.

The analysis of the information was carried out by periods, this resulted in the structuring of a critical-reflective report that led to conclusions and recommendations (implications), which allow not only to have a synthetic vision of the postgraduate work, but also prospects for improvement for the near future.

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1. Self-evaluation and evaluation for the purpose of improvement**

In addition to national recognition, postgraduate programs need internationally recognition of their quality. Therefore, it is necessary to look for agencies at the regional level in charge of accreditation, to which the institution has access as a member, but also as partner. This is so, because the development of this subsystem has had very particular characteristics, different from that experienced in other universities in the Central American and Latin American area<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the development that has been achieved, in postgraduate school in the last five years, there has been very little progress on this issue. Therefore, the need to take decisive steps in the initiation of internal self-evaluation processes of the programs has been established, in order to: a) obtain valuable experience in program self-evaluation, b) save funds to the institution, because in this there is already a sufficient critical mass to perform this action, and c) initiate a rearrangement from the programs to the system as such.

#### **3.2. Graduates, supply and demand for postgraduate studies**

The number of graduates from postgraduate in the third quarter of this year is 421, a number that will easily rise to more than six hundred at the end of the academic year. Of these, a good amount are graduates of the institution. Judging by this year's statistics, they will mostly be from master's programs, followed by medical specializations, programs in which the majority of graduates were female.

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2. It should be considered, on the one hand, that until the end of the 90s, the CNU reached an agreement with the government on duty, finally giving way to a decade of confrontations and tensions, effects of the Nicaraguan civil war (Tünnermann and Yarzabal, 2002). On the other hand, it is with the arrival of the FSLN to power at the end of the last decade, that the universities of the CNU, including UNAN-Managua, begin to receive greater attention and resources. Therefore, the development of the same begins at the beginning of this decade and at the beginning of this last five years the attention begins to be placed, with greater emphasis, on the postgraduate level.

This sector is important and must be taken very seriously by the institution, due to the significant increase it has experienced in this training sub-level. Therefore, graduates from postgraduate should be seen as the largest scientific representation of UNAN-Managua, the best judges of the quality of the training offered and the best source of the university «-» private company relationship, at a level of academic-scientific and economic relevance, especially if it is valued that they are a source of knowledge creation capable of transferring to the cost and price of the products. (Lage, 2015).

In the *External Verification Report* (2014), CNEA issued a series of recommendations for graduates from which, it is inferred, they have a postgraduate degree in order of importance and temporal development: a) to implement a computer system that, in addition to monitoring them, provide employment opportunities and assess the impact of the training process in the labor field, b) promote mutual cooperation processes between the institution and postgraduate graduates and, c) apply skills verification tests for them. Despite this, at the postgraduate level, this component has not had the necessary attention. Therefore, in the context of self-assessment processes for the purpose of improvement and accreditation of graduate programs, monitoring graduates and attention to the demand for programs, it is a very important need.

### **3.3. Approach to the social impact of the postgraduate course developed at UNAN-Managua**

The description of the current moment that the postgraduate course goes through, expressed above, has to have objective knowledge of the social impact. According to the *External Verification Report* (2014, pp. 112 and 113): “The educational offer is in correspondence with the socio-economic development needs of the country, in the same way the graduation profiles of the study programs are in correspondence with the economic, social and cultural needs of the country”. But in the field of postgraduate some observations must be made.

Continuing and professional training -professional training diplomas, professional specializations, and professional masters- is the group of postgraduate students with the highest demand. On their own initiative, natural persons (mostly from private institutions) and officials of government institutions are the ones registered in the programs. The offer is varied and its enrollment has an average of 20 students per program. Therefore, the impact on attention to demand is sufficient. However, on the impact, in relation to the professional development of the graduate, there is still no data to make a balance of it.

Medical-surgical specializations have a fixed offer for the country. In relation to enrollment, they are the second group of programs with the highest demand. However, according to MINSA data, the population of specialists in the different areas offered is still insufficient for a growing population, which demands better specialized medical care.

In the case of academic masters and doctorates, in relation to scientific production in different areas and types of research, it can be expressed: there are currently 15 programs of academic masters and 12 doctorate programs. However, scientific productivity and publication are still low. In addition, the quality of this is not being measured in relation to the areas in which it is developed, the transfer of knowledge in the same institution (at different levels), and the impact it may have on the social, productive and scientific sectors where this can apply.

### **3.4. The postgraduate studies of UNAN-Managua and its relationship with the national reality**

If what is stated in the previous section is considered, it is necessary to clearly explain and objectify the performance of the postgraduate studies of UNAN-Managua and its relationship with the national reality according to the axes: relationship with the government institutions, relationship with the private company and relationship with the community, those that are linked to the substantive functions of the university declared in its statutes.

In relation to government institutions, since the arrival of the FSLN to the government, UNAN-Managua has substantially improved its relationship with the institutions. Serves, through different programs of professional graduates and professional masters (SINACAN Special Program) to a considerable number of officials, in fields related to the work of municipalities, agricultural production, public administration, renewable energy generation, health, education, among others.

The relationship with the private company is less. However, in recent years, within the development and consensus policies between the Government of Nicaragua and this sector, actions were developed aimed at increasing and strengthening a vision of joint work between the universities of the CNU and the companies associated with COSEP: conferences, symposiums scientific fairs in fields such as innovation, entrepreneurship and technology. Routes for the training of business personnel and joint technology development have not yet been established. However, with the events of 2018, the relationship with private companies took an important turn towards the development and promotion of Medium and Small Businesses, in order to strengthen it. This also changed the vision of the university, which has begun to strengthen the relationship with this business sector.

The community is the sector where UNAN-Managua has the highest relationship. This is done through three types of relationships: a) the postgraduate student community conducts its research work in communities or in state centers that directly serve the population of the country, b) research work on programs requested by governmental institutions and c) research projects developed from specialized centers, institutes and laboratories.

### 3.5. Postgraduate challenges: goals achieved and goals to be achieved

Since 2014, with the approval of the University Statutes, it has been undergoing organizational change. In relation to the postgraduate course, the Postgraduate Teaching Directorate (DDP) was created - under the guidance of the Vice Rectorate for Teaching - the one that is energizing, the operation of the Postgraduate System, and at the same time, participates in coordinated actions with the Directorate of Postgraduate Research, among other instances. However, greater integration of all system structures is necessary.

Another important aspect is the creation of the Graduate Monitoring System and Relevance of the Postgraduate Offer. This will allow the collection of information from graduates, in order to follow up on them. So far, an *ad hoc* commission made up of specialists from the Vice-Rectorate for Teaching has carried out follow-up pilots, approach to employers and a substantial advance in the document that will govern its constitution. It is expected that by mid-2018 this system can begin to favor obtaining reliable information on: the situation of graduates and their performance, their opinion on the quality of the training carried out; of employers, on the performance of the above and; In both sectors, the perception of the demand for programs of both those offered and the emergence of new ones.

In relation to the axes of innovation and entrepreneurship - from a responsible vision, UNAN-Managua, in order to promote the empowerment of the population, in relation to social development and in close coordination with the Central Government - from postgraduate course it is preparing the insertion of these in the curriculum of the programs. These, in turn, will be linked to the “Learn, undertake and prosper” program, which is developed from initial education. These postgraduate lines will become competencies, which graduates must develop, which aims to consolidate a culture of innovation and responsible entrepreneurship with the national, regional and global ecosystem.

Training for virtual education at the postgraduate level is another aspect that is being promoted. Currently, the Virtualization Department has been created, which is responsible for transferring face-to-face programs to online education. In order to consolidate the culture of virtual distance education, the “Specialization in mediation for learning in the virtual distance education modality” has been developed, which will be a requirement for research teachers who enter this work modality in the postgraduate.

In 1998, the Central American University Superior Council (CSUCA), began to develop in Central America, through the Regional Careers and Postgraduate System (SICAR) an institutionalization strategy for the evaluation and accreditation of postgraduate programs, in which UNAN-Managua was incorporated, in order to train its staff.

In the context of PEI 2015-2019, and of the effective development of planned actions, a methodological self-assessment guide (GMA) has been developed, based on international standards such as ACAP and AUIP, but with a vision of its own that allows improving Management of postgraduate programs and raising, training, to the highest level.

With this guide, the process of self-evaluation of postgraduate programs will begin. The purpose of this is: to obtain experience in self-assessment processes, but with international standards, to involve personnel with a higher level in this process, to give greater impact to the DDP as guarantor of the quality of the processes, to efficiently promote and facilitate processes of evaluation and international accreditation of the programs that have reached the standards required by the GMA and finally strengthen the culture of postgraduate evaluation.

### **3.6. A new organization: towards systematicity and better functionality**

To achieve a better functioning in the Postgraduate Studies System, (SEP) it is necessary to start a reorganization process. For this, a proposal of norms has been made that will favor in the medium term the consolidation and improvement of the postgraduate in UNAN-Managua:

- The Postgraduate Regulation, as a central axis, proposes a new organization of the programs, especially those aimed at training and scientific production.
- The Regulations for the operation of the Postgraduate Studies System, gathers the experience of the current organization of the system, as support for the formation of the Scientific Academic Commissions in faculties, centers and research institutes. This structure will become the support for a deeper transformation in the next five years. With this, it is hoped to consolidate the programs and in turn the research, because it will be the instance that will guarantee -among other functions- the development of the research lines, through the creation and legalization of research groups. (Research and Innovation Policy, 2017).
- With the Regulation of continuing education studies, it is hoped to be able to effectively link this level of training with postgraduate studies.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

From each of the aspects addressed in this second part of the work it can be concluded that in accordance with the compliance that is being achieved in the development of this sub-level of higher education, the following positive implications will be obtained, in the medium term, in:

- The organization of the university, because in the medium term the programs will be consolidated in subjects such as management, research and self-evaluation. Once
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these processes are consolidated, and in the long term, the system can be restructured, so that a new structure oriented to the formation of postgraduate centers or schools will be achieved - following the international trend - or a new semi-autonomous structure that favors the full development of research, teaching, management and internationalization of the postgraduate of UNAN-Managua.

- System functionality in several aspects. However, it is urgent to improve in: a) system of entry, enrollment, registration and opening of programs, which must conform to the academic calendar of the university, b) retention, promotion and graduation, with the monitoring of the programs through committed academic-scientific support strategy on behalf of all postgraduate structures, especially coordinators and faculty members, c) the commitment of national and foreign teachers to genuinely participate with the programs both in teaching, tutoring and in the investigation, by means of explicit contracting instruments and d) in the administration - jointly between administration of faculties centers or research institutes and coordination of programs in the improvement of means, premises, attention to students and teachers - of the funds generated by the programs, with due control of internal audit of the institution.

In the medium and long term, respectively, in:

- The systematic and objective analysis of the postgraduate degree at UNAN-Managua, as processes that will bring about substantial changes in the decisions made in relation to the work of this level of higher education, in order to achieve an institution of advanced education in different fields of knowledge where it has strengths, and take on new challenges in areas - in which there is little or no experience - in which it can be invested and developed.
- The extension of the university and its impact on society in relation to the Human Development Plan, because it will be improved: the level of training in the different educational subsystems, the scientific and productive generation of the country, the ability to solve problems not only at the local level, but at the national level and finally the standard of living, not only of the graduates, but of the general population.

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