

# The University as an Educational Institution With Values in the Knowledge Society

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## Abstract

In this paper, we present a study which analyzes the relation between educational institution with the values of their students, all related with the knowledge society. The specific profile, young university students, help us to determine their prospects in the actual framework and beyond. The research is also focused on a specific country, Spain, although cross-cultural studies are being developed. The surveys were recruited through an online survey, the best way for our target to participate. We conduct a survey in which we elicited the importance of university like an educational institution regarding the knowledge society frame, as well as the values of their students depending on the election of the educational institution. This allows us to determine if the election of the educational institution is related with the values of their students, and if these values determine the election of the university. We try to establish by means of a quantitative study the profile of these students. For this reason, the study reveals knowledge of a new relations in specific variables, determined by the experience lived, which is an area of research that has received little attention to date. The variables to investigate are Knowledge society, educational institution and values (of their students) and its relation.

**Keywords:** educational institution, university, values, students, knowledge society

## 1. Introduction

The university has become the subject of much critical debate in the social sciences in recent years. The dominant opinion says that they are organized networks of socialization experiences that prepare people to act in society (Meyer, 1977). The forms of knowledge that the university has prized are being challenged by new forms of knowledge valued in the wider world (Barnett, 2000). It is clear that the path that has led us to place ourselves in the current society of knowledge and the consequent democratic requirement, as well as universalized higher education are substantially modified (De Espinosa, 2001). By combining interests, positions and group strength, they demanded recognition as a social and cultural institution, so they achieved a place in the history of European peoples (Pichardo and Oliva, 2013).

Initially the university was conceived as a commitment to advance knowledge, by professors and students. Instead, those foundational principles are being lost through a long and complicated process (Gim énez-Amaya and S ánchez-Migall ón, 2011). The task of the university, science, as well as research, teaching and education, all linked to communication, is carried out within the framework of an institution (Jaspers, 2013), you should not lose sight of the educational task, despite the sociological changes. "The interest is directed, then, to the spheres of knowledge in which the exact, demonstrable truth is possible" (Guardini, 2012: 75). The university exists to design and assemble the cultural and human features of an expanded map of a universalistic cosmos. Education within the university must perform in a distinctive way, so as to provide society with knowledge valued by itself (Gim énez-Amaya and S ánchez-Migall ón, 2011).

In this study, we investigate values in educational institution, testing hypotheses concerning the effects of knowledge society, and direct and indirect effects of values of the students. There are some specific words that we need to explain in advance, like university or educational institution. In the literature the major part of authors investigate with the name of "university", in spite of this, for the methodological part we prefer the term "educational institution" because in this case includes universities, business schools and other kind of school organization. Then is more democratic for the students and researchers. Other specific part, the use of the term "values" in a general way and not with specific possible values. This is because in this occasion we are not going to investigate within other specific variables, this point it would be for a future research.

Consequently, the variables to investigate are Knowledge society, educational institution and values (of their students) and its relation. These hypotheses are tested among university students, who are more individualistic compared to the

rest of the society (Karakitapoglu-Aygun & Imamoglu, 2002). The theoretical background of the study and the methodology are outlined in the next sections. We then present our findings in a methodical part and conclude with a discussion of implications for future research.

## 2. Educational Institution in the Knowledge Society

The university can not enlighten society as lighting model took college, but can provide structures for public debate between experts and lay cultures (Delanty, 2001). The number of universities globally has extended exponentially, and nearly all nation-states now have universities (Riddle 1989, 1993; UNESCO 2005).

Moreover, the quantitative and experimental methods associated with such an approach often fail to provide adequate insights into the social and contextual complexity of the educational process (Hammersley, 1997; Scott & Usher, 1999). The role of structure is vital with respect to identifying the knowledge generation developments (Zougris, 2018). The ethical concept revolves around the responsibility that the university as an institution that is an important part of in a community and within society can and should train people in solidarity with that context (Dom ínguez-Pach ón, 2010). With this, it could be said that the two main intentions of the University are, essentially, the human and professional training that would respond to the academic field, as well as the construction of new knowledge as a direct objective of the research (Dom ínguez-Pach ón, 2010). Conceptualizing the modality of activity is a very inspiring task (Zougris, 2018).

According to some authors, the university is distant from inappropriate to capitalism, as the preceding thesis would entitle, but is in fact completely combined into it and, as a new managerialism takes over the university, there is a consequential loss of academic autonomy (Curie and Newson, 1998; Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1997; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). This thesis suggests that the university has become a major player in the global market and in information-based capitalism (Delanty, 2001).

It treats as peripheral the fact that modern educational systems are society-wide and state-controlled institutions (Wheeler 1966). But the essential fact is that within these new paradigms there are still solid foundations for their role with society. For this Dom ínguez-Pach ón comments that in order for the university's stamp to be in a responsible way, it must intercede through different actions that are of a significant nature and, in turn, universities must be transparent to also be influenced by said society that it involves them, without structural blockages and, essentially, with a motivation that makes them participate in the improvement of vulnerable groups. (Dom ínguez-Pach ón, 2010).

We face the objection of the undeniable projection of valuations and conceptions of life in ethical discourse, where the conviction that pushes us to justify our valuations and ethical attitudes implies content of an ethical nature (S ánchez-Migall ón, 2008). Ethics, understood by authors as a critical reflection on values, provides us with reasons that justify actions or not, so that moral behaviors are analyzed. Ethics explains, from its universality, the human moral experience and establishes the modes of behavior in a justifiable way (Bol íar, 2005). Therefore, having ethics in the different spheres of social life (Cortina, 2011). Consequently, students are aspired to be integral and practice honesty, responsibility, kindness, modesty, duty, respect, solidarity, truth, belonging, honesty, tolerance, strength, prudence and fidelity, among many other values. Without giving priority levels, it is therefore considered that, depending on the circumstances in which they are, they correspond to a person of integral values (Hodel í-Tablada and Fuentes-Pelier, 2014).

The identity of the university is determined neither by technocraticmanagerial strategies nor by purely academic pursuits: in the 'knowledge society' knowledge cannot be reduced to its 'uses' or to itself because it is fixed in the deeper cognitive developments of society, in theoretical structures and in the epistemic structures of power and interests (Delanty, 2001).

## 3. The Importance of Values in an Educational Institution

Moral values are found to play an important role, but other values also influence the ethical decisions (Greenbank, 2003). Although research appears to support philosophical morals that denounce materialism as an individual and social peril, the debate over materialism is not yet conclusive (Karabati & Cemalcilar, 2010). New and broad images of the world, individualized people and humanity, all conceived on universalist bases, strengthened considerably (Boli 2005). To know the mission of the university, it is worth mentioning that it is the institution where higher education is received, not the only type, but where the highest academic badges are received and where the most qualified professors and researchers must be. People are easily habituated with the material conditions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999) and the collective effect of the adjustment with such avoidance is often unfavorable for welfare (Karabati and Cemalcilar, 2010). The value can be expressed in the action in a rigid or flexible way (Gonz ález-Maura, 2000). Values are predominantly critical for institutional rhetorics (Mohr and White, 2008). This flexibility is discovered when the value is what regulates the performance of the subject not in a mechanical and absolute way, but from a situation analysis of a specific nature that is presented, with this also the search for possible alternatives to the problems that the subject faces in his performance

(Leontiev, 1981). In this way, flexibility represents a higher level of value performance in the regulation of its action (González-Maura, 2000). This value from the motivational point of personality has several strata to function in the regulation of acting. These values can regulate the particular performance in a persevering or inconstant way, and also they have an individual cut as well as supra-individual, being part of a social reality, this fact makes the actuality of that context interfere with what happened within the social life and the needs of this society, in addition to historically affecting the system of values officially instituted in a specific society (González-Maura, 2000).

Another aspect that stands out within this mission of the university is the search for vocations to contemplate quality education, precisely the lack of professionals and researchers was what delayed the correct development of the university in Spain. Therefore, university education thus focused on two objectives: professionalization and research (Hernández and Jara, 2002). Values are organized in relational systems that deliver anchors for the explanatory considerations (Mohr and White, 2008).

Kohn's research (1969, and subsequently) shows exactly the same result (Meyer, 1977). Since they had been based on observing and imitating what was being done in other universities without raising the question of whether it was actually developing in an adequate way or not, the reality was that they were homogenizing on a way. "The university is an institution that governs itself, an institution of public law" (Jaspers, 2013: 197). But the Catholic university is the one that can offer a greater degree of wisdom for its interest in knowledge, with an openness to unlimited dialogue, returning to truth and good (Giménez-Amaya and Sánchez-Migallón, 2011). The quality of higher education is not only resolved with the achievement of a product consistent with its quality processes as efficiency, but also for the achievement of a product consistent with its goals and objectives, where there must also be coherence of the goals sought with values, expectations and social needs (De la Orden et al., 1997). At a time like the current one, in which university systems are undergoing profound changes (Casares-García et al., 2010). Due to the fact that ethical value perfects man in terms of being a man, in his will, in his reason and prepares him to live in a collective (Hodel-Tablada and Fuentes-Pelier, 2014). As a consequence of the quality of hierarchy, values constitute codes where they are ordered hierarchically to fulfill the role of making sense and guiding people, institutions, groups and societies. The value code does not have to be the same for each of these entities, although it is recognized that there is certain consensus that they can give them a more universal character (Barba-Martín and Alcántara-Santuano, 2003: 20).

Educational systems themselves are consequently, in a sense, ideas. They rationalize in modern terms and remove from sacred and primordial explanations the nature and organization of personnel and knowledge in modern society. In the education of values, a high mission has been assigned to the educational institutions, without a doubt, the universities constitute fundamental links in this process (Hodel-Tablada and Fuentes-Pelier, 2014). It is the teacher's task to particularize in a conscious way so that students are effectively motivated in a way in which they are valued (Hodel-Tablada and Fuentes-Pelier, 2014). Although the formation of the fundamental values of the human being occurs during childhood and in social life, we consider that it also concerns and especially importantly, formal education. (Barba-Martín and Alcántara-Santuano, 2003). Thus, it was possible to imagine the phenomenon of over-education, in which a surfeit of training signaled inefficiency in a nation-state's role-allocation system and possibly even led to social disorder and dreaded anomie (Frank & Meyer, 2007).

#### 4. Hypotheses

Education is a central component in the public profile of entities, which significantly affects their life opportunities. Such an organization clearly influences the social order beyond the immediate socialization practices it offers to young people (Meyer, 1977).

Virtually all elite occupations globally are certified by the university (Sullivan 2005), and nearly all the world's stratification systems are legitimated by university-based knowledge (Frank & Meyer, 2007). The "knowledge society" that results is distinguished by the extraordinary degree to which the university is linked to society (Frank & Meyer, 2007). Therefore, it is argued that:

##### **H1: Knowledge society has a direct influence on educational institution**

The university is, then, more than an institution of knowledge production but has also nurtured the dominant and emergent cultural models of society (Delanty, 2001). When people's basic needs are more or less fulfilled, it should be expected that incremental income will go to products that fit their values (de Mooij, 2010). The university's students and academic contents increasingly took on national meanings and purposes (Altbach 1998). Therefore, it is proposed that:

##### **H2: Educational institution has a direct influence on values of their students**

For the university's knowledge and knowers, and for the pedagogy that connects them, the implications of society's reinvention are striking (Frank & Meyer, 2007). If education is a myth in modern society it is a powerful one (Meyer,

1977). Simultaneously, the liberal victory animated the move toward a new world society, collected of individualized persons, commonly considered as autonomous, equivalent actors with a extensive range of civil rights (Suárez 2007; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). The university can be reborn (Barnett, 2000). Based on these findings, it is argued that:

**H3: Values of their students has a direct influence on educational institution**

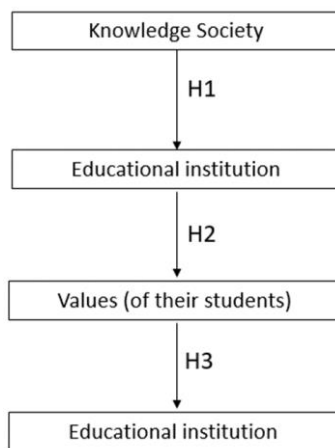


Figure I. Model

**5. Research Method**

From this model (figure I) with three variables it was made a survey with 7 sentences related with the variables. The way to know the grade was with a 5 Likert scale (Table 1). The survey asked the degree of agreement of the 7 sentences, where 1 was little agreed and 5 was very agree.

A convenience sample of 120 university students in Spain was recruited through an online survey. The survey was announced initially on e-groups for university students in communication and advertising, groups well-known for their activities. The announcement included a synopsis of the goals of the study, contact information of the researcher, and the hyperlink to the questionnaire made available on an online survey site. The author also sent the survey announcement directly to students in their own classes. Participation was on a voluntary basis and anonymity was maintained.

Table I. Variables and items

Sentence	Variables
1. The university is an important educational institution in our society	Educational institution/ Knowledge society
2. The university has always been an important educational place	Educational institution/ Knowledge society
3. Knowledge society is the basis of the educational institution	Knowledge society/ Educational institution
4. The educational institution is an important point in our knowledge society	Educational institution/ Knowledge society
5. Your election of educational institution demonstrates your type of values	Educational institution/ Values (of their students)
6. The educational institution is essential for your kind of values	Values (of their students)/ Educational institution
7. Your values are related with your election of educational institution	Values (of their students)/ Educational institution

## 6. Results and Analysis

The analysis of the data obtained in the questionnaires demonstrates the hypothesis and the relationships between variables. A total of 87 responses were usable for analyses (Table 2). From the measurement of the variables (Knowledge society, educational institution and values) and the number of items used for each scale, as well as the references used, the instrument was validated by first contrasting the model with a confirmatory factor analysis structural equation.

Our results are shown in Table 3. It has been demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between the variables with a high punctuation between them. Sentences related to Knowledge society and Educational institution are the highest numbers. The paper of the university in the society is demonstrated, and the also the relations among the variables.

Table II. Sample Characteristics

Demographic variables	Description and percentage
Age	19 years old: 74,8% 20 years old: 19,5% 21 years old: 5,7%
Gender	Female: 87,3% Male: 12,6%
Main occupation	Student: 100%
Location	Spain: 100%

Table III. Sentences and average

Sentence	Average rating scale Likert
1. The university is an important educational institution in our society	4.1
2. The university has always been an important educational place	4.8
3. Knowledge society is the basis of the educational institution	3.5
4. The educational institution is an important point in our knowledge society	4.2
5. Your election of educational institution demonstrates your type of values	3.7
6. The educational institution is essential for your kind of values	3.1
7. Your values are related with your election of educational institution	4.4

While the qualities of data available for analysis were quite small, the findings of hypotheses result in positive feedback (Table 4).

Table IV. Relationships in model

H	Relation	Results
H1:	Knowledge society → Educational institution	accepted
H2:	Educational institution → Values (of their students)	accepted
H3:	Values (of their students) → Educational institution	accepted

## 7. Conclusions and Limitations

While the results of this study cannot be generalized due to the limited geographical coverage both with respect to origin and institution and due to the response rate, this exploratory study does suggest that the educational institution affects in the values of their students and also on the contrary way. All of this with the framework of the knowledge society. The great paper of the educational institution on the society, since the beginning of this institution until now is proven with our results. For this people, young students, the educational institution has always been essential.

The new university knowledge, as means for collective ends, promised benefits (Frank & Meyer, 2007). Universities, after all, have a strong self-sense of themselves in terms of the knowledge enterprise, as we might term it (Barnett, 2000). Then, that knowledge has given way to knowledges (Barnett, 2000). The university survives and flourishes, as a grand and cohesive scheme, precisely because what are forged at its core are not mundane skills but rather the transcendent principles that constitute the knowledge society's foundations (Frank & Meyer, 2007).

Finally, a possible limitation of this research is that it focused mainly on data collected from Spanish students and is not representative of the total students. Another possible limitation lies in the fact that the research based on the selected literature focused only on three variables. Further study could discriminate among nationalities and gender, as students or Universities for different nationalities and sexes may differ.

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