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A Look at How Philosophical Perspectives of Adult Education Shape the Practice at Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Una mirada sobre las perspectivas filosóficas y prácticas de la educación de personas adultas en la Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Um olhar sobre como as perspectivas filosóficas e práticas da educação de adultos na Universidade Nacional, Costa Rica

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Abstract:

Introduction. Looking close at the philosophical orientation of institutions and educators allows the examination of whether teaching practice, in this case, higher education, is consistent with the purpose of education. **Objective.** In the interest of gaining a historical understanding of the role of the Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica (UNA) in adult education in Costa Rica, this essay aims to analyze philosophical perspectives by drawing on relevant written documentation. **Discussion.** This institution is currently one of the five public universities in Costa Rica and has a robust student funding system. Under its *necessary university* principle, students with different economic and social statuses have access to high-quality post-secondary education. Having a clear educational philosophy is vital as it helps examine the educators' and the institution's practice critically. This essay gives a broader understanding of the philosophical perspectives behind the teaching and learning practices proposed by UNA's core guideline, the Pedagogical Model (PM). **Conclusions.** As final conclusions, it can be stated that this institution has lost its driving humanistic perspective, established in the first Organization Statute. In addition, on a sad note, Nuñez's founding philosophical orientation and goals for UNA are partially accomplished since even though there is an accessible education for all, teaching and learning practices do not guarantee any commitment to social action and social reform.

Keywords: Adult education; higher education; pedagogical model; philosophical orientation.

Resumen:
Introducción. El darle una mirada atenta a la orientación filosófica de las instituciones educativas y su personal educativo permite examinar si la práctica docente, en este caso universitaria, es consistente con el propósito educativo de la institución. **Objetivo.** Con el fin de obtener una comprensión histórica del papel de la Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica (UNA) en la educación de personas adultas en Costa Rica, el propósito de este ensayo es analizar las perspectivas filosóficas a través de una indagación documental. **Discusión.** Actualmente la institución es una de las 5 universidades públicas de Costa Rica y cuenta con un fuerte sistema de financiamiento estudiantil que se alinea con su principio de ser la *universidad necesaria.* Este principio se torna fundamental al aspirar que el estudiantado, sin importar sus condiciones económicas y sociales, tenga acceso a educación universitaria de alta calidad. Este ensayo, además, brinda una comprensión amplia sobre las perspectivas filosóficas detrás de las prácticas de enseñanza y aprendizaje propuestas desde el Modelo Pedagógico de la UNA. **Conclusiones.** Como conclusiones generales se destaca que la institución ha perdido la dirección humanística que se estableció en su primer Estatuto Orgánico. Además, desafortunadamente, los objetivos y la orientación filosófica fundadora de Nuñez están siendo parcialmente alcanzados, ya que, a pesar de ofrecer educación accesible para todas las personas, las prácticas de enseñanza y aprendizaje no garantizan compromiso y reforma social.

Palabras claves: Educación de personas adultas; educación superior; modelo pedagógico; orientación filosófica.

Resumo:
Introdução. Observar atentamente a orientação filosófica de instituições e educadores permite examinar se a prática de ensino, neste caso educação superior, é consistente com o objetivo da educação e como ela é realmente praticada. Ter uma filosofia educacional clara é fundamental, pois ajuda a examinar criticamente a prática dos educadores e da instituição. **Objetivo.** O interesse deste ensaio é compreender o papel da Universidade Nacional, Costa Rica (UNA) na educação de adultos na Costa Rica e analisar suas perspectivas filosóficas recorrendo à documentação escrita relevante. **Discussão.** Atualmente, esta instituição é uma das cinco universidades estatais da Costa Rica e possui um forte sistema de financiamento para estudantes. De acordo com o princípio de *universidade necessária,* estudantes com diferentes status econômicos e sociais têm acesso ao ensino pós-secundário de alta qualidade. Este ensaio fornece uma compreensão mais ampla das perspectivas filosóficas por trás das práticas de ensino e aprendizagem propostas na diretriz principal da UNA, o Modelo Pedagógico (MP). **Conclusão.** Como conclusões gerais, destaca-se que a instituição perdeu a direção humanística que foi estabelecida em seu primeiro Estatuto Orgânico. Além disso, infelizmente, os objetivos e a orientação filosófica fundadora de Nuñez estão sendo parcialmente alcançados, pois, apesar de oferecer educação acessível a todas as pessoas, as práticas de ensino e aprendizagem não garantem compromisso e reforma social.

Palavras-chave: Educação de adultos; educação superior; modelo pedagógico; orientação filosófica.

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Introduction

The word philosophy comes from Greek roots that mean "love of wisdom." Philosophy in higher education guides individuals to reflect and self-question key concepts and issues such as What is the nature of teaching and learning? What is knowledge? What is to be educated? in their constant search for wise teaching and learning experiences. It is through philosophical debates that the meaning and interpretation of simple statements can have major implications in this search. To this end, philosophical perspectives inform the development of educational policies, programs, practices, and movements in higher education institutions. As such philosophies of practice embed the how teachers, program planners, facilitators and managers drive knowledge and practice through values and beliefs. In adult education in particular, five core philosophical orientations have been discussed that include liberalism, progressivism, humanism, behaviorism and radicalism (Elias, & Merriam, 1995; Tisdell, & Taylor, 1999). Rather than forcing adult educators and universities into classification boxes or to determine any *rightness* or *wrongness* to philosophy and practice; rather, this essay helps build awareness of the relationship between Universidad Nacional (UNA)'s historical and foundational principles and current practices.

Different from the motivations behind the adult literacy movement in the 70s that established *the necessary university,* as a contemporary university, it is impossible for UNA to escape from neoliberal regimes and influences that might interfere with its philosophical perspective. This paper offers an opportunity to explore and discuss a variety of historical and philosophical trends that have shaped higher education over the years, more specifically at UNA. Through exploring the past, educators can develop, define and articulate their own philosophical approach to their current practice of higher education. This essay provides an opportunity for readers to examine the nature and scope of adult education as it has evolved, to reflect critically on their own assumptions and beliefs and develop ideas and knowledge to help assess educational thought and practice.

In the following pages, I present an overview of UNA's organizational description, background and theories around philosophical perspectives followed by possible successes, limitations, and tensions to move from theory to practice, and concluding remarks.

Organizational Description and Background

UNA is a distinctive post-secondary state institution because it created long-lasting social justice effects on Costa Rican higher education that continue to this day. This institution was founded in 1972 and approved unanimously by the Congress under the Law act 5182 (UNA, 2017c). This type of unanimous law adoption is not common in a democratic legislative process unless there is a firm collective belief. UNA was preceded by the Normal School of Costa Rica, dedicated to teacher training and the Normal Superior School, which was committed to the training of

middle school teachers. UNA inherited not only infrastructure from those previous institutions but also a pedagogical culture that would later have implications on its own pedagogical and humanistic focus. The same year UNA was created, two extension branches were founded in two rural areas: one in the northern part of the country and the other one in the southern region. This decision intended to offer formal adult education to rural students who otherwise would not witness and participate in the economic development of the country (Universidad Nacional [UNA], 2017c). Nowadays, UNA has three rural campuses: Brunca, in the southern part of the country; Chorotega, in the northern area, and Sarapiquí, in the Huetar Norte region.

Currently, this institution is one of the five state universities in Costa Rica, and has a strong student funding system. The institution strongly advocates to be the *necessary university*. This principle underlies the belief that students in spite of their economic and social status should have access to high quality post-secondary education. UNA has three rural campuses in three unprivileged rural regions, which have marked a difference in educational opportunities for the members of these communities.

This institution emerged in the early 1970s. A demographic boom, educational transformations, and an economic shift characterized this time in Costa Rica. More specifically, the economy underwent drastic changes that reduced poverty remarkably by bolstering domestic marker production processes (UNA, 2017c). In this changing socio-economic landscape, the need to offer high-quality higher education to less privileged sectors seemed likely to be next step in social justice. On a similar note, UNA's first president, Rev. Benjamín Núñez, enacted his personal philosophical perspectives, which have strongly influenced teaching and learning practices. Under his leadership, Rev. Núñez eagerly aspired to build a university that could satisfy the real needs of the country; he called it *the necessary university*. As a leader, he promoted pedagogical principles that emphasize learners' identification of their own learning needs and skills, and development of fully rounded individuals. In this quest, he took up questions about social systems and group-based inequities and encouraged learners and teachers to believe that the individual's learning interests and priorities would be to be fully engaged with their country's real needs (Núñez, 1974). His ideas were highly influenced by the adult literacy movement that took place in Latin America during the 1970s. Both groups, reformists and revolutionaries, had their own agenda for adult literacy; the former had a traditional capitalist interest while the latter had a radical-emancipatory driven purpose (Donoso-Romo, 2014).

For his part, Núñez was strongly influenced by the revolutionary Freirean radical philosophy, and his social justice principles were evident in his quest for the necessary university (Soto Ramírez, 2013). Like Freire (2002), Núñez believed in the power of the oppressed to liberate themselves as well as their oppressor. Formal education was seen as the tool for liberation. Added to this influence was the support of the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy that, at that time, was leading advocate for social reform not only in Costa Rica but also in other Latin American countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, and Brazil (Omar Aveiro, 2017). His bishop sent Núñezto study to the Sociology

Faculty at the Niagara University so that he could lead Christian unions in the country. Núñez was a senior fellow professor at the University of Costa Rica, a Labor Minister, a chancellor, an ambassador, a United Nations representative, the founder of Rerum Novarum Union, and the founder of UNA (Divistech, 2010). His legacy to social justice is not limited to the founding principles of UNA; on the contrary, his efforts to promote social change and reforms that safeguard the welfare of all social classes prevail to today as Costa Rica's cherished social democracy.

UNA's mission statement pursues aims to generate, share, and socialize knowledge, and to develop humanist professionals with a creative and critical attitude (UNA, 2017b). By attaining this mission, it will contribute to the democratic and progressive transformation of communities that will promote higher well-being for society. The institution targets to contribute to an eco-social and peaceful coexistence where the main locus of interest is underprivileged and at-risk of social exclusion sectors (UNA, 2017b). The Organization Statute looked at transformative knowledge, inclusion, humanism, environmental accountability, integrity, and transparency as the institution's core values (UNA, 2015). According to this enactment in the Organization Statute, this institution's main activities cover four different areas: first, the teaching area in which teaching and learning practices are embedded; second, the outreach area in which projects are espoused with the community to provide services to any population who might not otherwise have access to; third, the research area in which faculty and students are encouraged to contribute to and further debate in key areas through their research; and, finally, the scholarly publication area in which faculty is encouraged to share their accounts of their teaching and research experiences and evidences by publishing their works (UNA, 2015).

UNA's mission and activities have not changed much since its foundation. From its first Organization Statute (UNA, 1976) written in 1976 to the current one from 2016, core values and areas are still the same. Humanism was proclaimed in its foundation as the essential philosophical perspective behind its idea of a publicly funded university for all, and envisioned an institution free of social segregation that was influenced by the Latin American revolutionary movement (Araya Pochet, 1993). Today, this institution continues to cherish social justice principles. This year, for example, it is proclaiming and celebrating 2017 the year of Dialogue for Life and Peace in which awareness of basic human rights such as solidarity, humanism, equity, dialogue, peace and respect must be reinforced in every activity organized. All members of the institution are accountable for standing on and achieving the same level of dignity (UNA, 2017a).

Adult Education Theories

Adult education comprises intentionally designed activities in educational institutions where attaining specific objectives concerned with the education of adults is a crucial characteristic (Groen, & Kawalilak, 2014). Different from adult education, adult learning includes formal, informal, non-formal, and incidental learning processes. These processes acknowledge

daily events that involve observing, interacting, and engaging with other individuals in a variety of social activities. Hence, adult education cannot exclude adult learning processes.

Four main traditional adult learning theories are: andragogy, self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformative learning. Andragogy, developed in the 1960s, is recognized as the first framework for adult learning. In attempting to understand how and why adults learn, this framework outlines six main assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners: their need to know, the learners' self-concept, the role of the learners' experiences, their readiness to learn, their orientation to learning, and their motivation.

Self-directed learning focuses on understanding how adults learn on their own by setting plans to attain goals, how they get resources, and how they evaluate their progress. At the heart of all of theories about how adults learn is the notion of experience and experiential learning. In this regard, John Dewey's contribution on the link between life experiences and learning brought to light the significant value of what adults bring with them from earlier experiences in life (Groen, & Kawalilak, 2014). Finally, transformative learning, another influential theory of adult learning, is grounded in Mezirow's (1996) belief that learning is "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience to guide future action" (p. 162). Merriam et al. (2007) provided a further understanding of adult learning by discussing how some theories of adult learning focus on adult characteristics (Knowles, 1980 cited in Merriam et al., 2007) such as an adult's self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, problem-centered focus, and internal motivation, while some others highlight adults' life situation, internal load, external load, and power factors (McClusky, 1970). They also stated that there are contributions to understanding adult learning that center on changes in adults' consciousness (Freire, 2002; Mezirow, 2000).

Newer approaches to adult learning broaden our understanding of learning processes by exploring connections to embodiment, spirituality, narrative, critical theory, postmodernism, feminist perspectives, and non-western traditions of knowing (Merriam et al., 2007). In spite of the different foci of these adult education and learning theories or approaches, they all recognize the complexities of adults' particularities and social contexts. With this complexity in mind, understanding adult learning is not restricted to the theories above.

Philosophical Perspectives in Education

Elias and Merriam (1980) provided a seminal work on the philosophical foundations of adult education. In their work, they identified five philosophical traditions: liberal, progressive, behaviorist, humanistic and radical. Liberal adult education is the oldest and most predominant. Even though it dates back to classical Greek, it has a become a standard. It emphasizes the rational and intellectual elements as well as the transmission of knowledge where educators are

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experts and authorities who control teaching-learning transactions. Progressive adult education includes a holistic view that places learners' experiences in the center and evokes a life-wide social development. This philosophical perspectives envisions educators are facilitators (Price, 2000).

Though the Behaviorist perspective has been understood more as a system of psychological theory, its assumptions and questions are rooted in philosophy. Through the design and implementation of behavioral objectives, educators teach by reinforcement and behavioral modification and competency. The Humanistic perspective seeks to attain a holistic development of the learners where their emotional, affective and intellectual dimensions are equally important. Self-directed learning, collaborative inquiry and andragogy are some traditional theories that aligned with the humanistic class. Finally, the Radical perspective sets goals for understanding education as a driver of social change and examine power differentials as it is the case of questioning the political and economic interests of power elites. Critical theory and feminist theory are rooted in this philosophical perspective.

Tisdell and Taylor (1999) elaborated on Elias and Merriam's work and made a distinction between autonomy-driven and relationally-driven. Autonomy-driven philosophies frame Humanism, Critical-Humanism and Critical-Emancipatory. Humanism encompasses the psychological dimension and the goal of education is personal fulfillment; the Critical-Humanism evokes both the rational and the psychological dimensions while autonomy is the goal of education; the Critical-Emancipatory emphasizes the rational and sociological dimensions to attain social change. In this perspective, the student is a modern activist. The relationally-driven philosophies reveal the Feminist-Humanist and Feminist-Emancipatory. While the Feminist-Humanist focuses on the relational dimension and points to personal development, the Feminist-Emancipatory turns into cultural and structural worldviews that advocate for social transformation.

Philosophical Perspectives at Universidad Nacional

Humanism was a central philosophical perspective for this institution since its foundation. In contrast to Knowles' (cited in Tisdell & Taylor, 1999) conceptualization of humanism, UNA did pay close attention to the socio-cultural context and positionality (culture, gender, or class) difference of each learner. With a strong commitment to its Organization Statute, UNA has created a culture of humanistic orientation by pursuing students' personal fulfillment and critical thinking first so that they can commit and contribute to their country's development later (Núñez, 1974). This perspective is a less individualistic and more collective one. On this note, out of the 11 core principles established in the Pedagogical Model (PM), five of them directly address the importance of guiding learning toward a just and egalitarian society (UNA, 2007). These ideas are clearly aligned with Tisdell and Taylor's (1999) conceptualization of critical humanism which they explain in this way: "Two essential practices of the critical/humanist

teacher involve connecting the learner's experience to the topic under discussion and the use of critical reflection and rational discourse in the context of promoting a more democratic society" (p. 8). A philosophical principle in the PM, that is apparent in Price's (2000) discussion, is the idea that there is a need to establish high quality professional training by determining the overarching principles of each discipline (UNA, 2007). To this author, disciplinary "knowledge is not unimportant in humanistic education; indeed, it is perceived as the essential means through which learners develop their potentials" (Price, 2000, p. 4).

An unanticipated finding when I examined the different archival documents from UNA was that no other philosophical perspective has held as great an influence on the core of principles of this organization as the progressive one, even though it was never established explicitly. The focus on lifelong learning combines experience and social reform in many of the statements of the PM and the Organization Statue. Taking account of Merriam and Brockett's (1997 as cited in Bierema, 2001) three major dimensions of this philosophical perspective, some underlying intentions are examined. First, "The acceptance of empirical rationality for understanding and solving social problems" (Bierema, 2001, p. 22) is found under UNA's teaching principle that evokes for experience exchange as the building blocks of research and outreach projects (UNA, 2007). Second, "The reliance on experience rather than authority for one's source of knowledge" (Bierema, 2001, p. 22) is tied to the proposition that the learner should be provided with spaces for critical reflection to be able to discern whether to accept or refuse new knowledge (UNA, 2007). Third, "The allowance of social action and social reform as a legitimate concern of politicians, educators and philosophers" (Bierema, 2001, p. 22) relates to the critical and reflective attitude towards policy and changes that UNA should be accountable for as a higher education institution (UNA, 2007).

Regarding the role of the adult educator, UNA seemed to have established a humanist orientation. The PM sees the adult educator as a facilitator of the learning process. Professors are expected to promote a respectful classroom space where confidence, mistakes, and learners' different ways to learn are valued (UNA, 2007). Contrary to humanism's conceptualization of the facilitator as a co-learner in the educational process who shares an egalitarian relationship with learners (Price, 2000), the PM did not state any egalitarian role; on the contrary, learning is conceived as an intentional process mediated by a professor who promotes knowledge building (UNA, 2007). While the humanistic orientation can be found in UNA, this is not the only philosophical perspective evident; indeed, adult learners and educators have engaged in radical practices.

The radical philosophical perspective is apparent in this organization when I analyzed students' extra curricular activities such as marches, fairs, and lectures. The influence of Núñez in radical-emancipatory practices at UNA is undeniable. One clear example is the role of student movements at UNA. The Students Federation of Universidad Nacional (FEUNA) was founded

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alongside UNA and its active participation was enacted in its first Organizational Statute. Students from both undergraduate and graduate programs can participate. This student group has its own Organizational Statue and it is emphatic in establishing that students are equally responsible to bring about social change. Indeed, Article 6 in this Organizational Statue stated that student movement would direct its attention to people at risk of social and economic exclusion (Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional [FEUNA], 2012). Members of these groups are students in any level of their majors who have an authentic desire to advocate for social justice. FEUNA has witnessed how students have stood up for cutbacks and abuses using their own voice. They have stood up in defense of public education by demanding higher investments (Recio, 2016). Aditionally, they have also demanded change by supporting community in times of crisis such as opposing high transportation fees (Romero Barboza, 2016) and hydroelectric power projects (Splendlingwimmer, 2019).

Successes, Limitations, and Tensions

UNA was created to save succeeding unprivileged sectors and guarantee higher education for all. Opinions may differ on this organization as an instrument for social equality and quality of education for the country. To some extent, the institution's efforts signify some marker of success in its interest in reaching out to students from rural. First, from 2012 to 2017, funding for scholarships and awards has doubled, which is an evidence of its commitment to reaching more students every year (UNA, 2017d). Rural campuses have the highest percentages in funding; indeed, Sarapiquí campus leads the list with 86% of its students who have received various types of funding, followed by Brunca with 82% and Chorotega with 71%. Second, UNA's commitment to reaching our less favoured students can be seen in the number of students who come from geographically remote locations. To foster this intention, new residences in the three rural campuses will be inaugurated in 2018, and will provide more opportunities to prospective and current students from remote locations. This type of accommodation is decisive for most students as it is the only option to move from their geographical area. Residences are free of cost and provide students the benefit of living in an environment that fosters their educational growth. All resources are at a short distance since these buildings are on campus (UNA, 2017d).

The efforts behind these intentions are justified by the students' academic response. In the words of former university president, Sandra León, research has shown that students who received various types of funding or award have a more outstanding academic performance and that is why the institution will continue to strength all equity programs as well as regional campuses (Barrantes, 2014). The three most popular degrees in this university are Business Administration, Computer Engineering and International Relationships and Commerce (Chinchilla, 2017). Business Administration is offered in the three regional campuses. The other two are offered in two campuses except for Sarapiquí (UNA, n.d.a-b, 2015).

In spite of the many efforts to offer suitable programs in all campuses, the issue of the budget for rural branches is, I argue, a point of. Unfortunately, in recent years, state universities have increased their confrontations with the government to avoid budget reduction. The last march took place last September when students demanded the government the legislatively allocated 1.5 % of GDP instead of the current 1.38% (Cerdas, 2017). This 0.12 % reduction directly affects the decisions made by university authorities regarding the distribution of budget, and it has a domino effect. After adjusting decisions in the main campus, rural campuses are jeopardized as their budgets are cut as well. Budget has created tension between government and academia. Budget reductions have made students, faculty and administrators to march on the streets. They have made explicit accusations of the government's interest in "dismantling public education in a push for privatization" (Tico Times, 2010, para. 8). As Tico Times (2010) reported a main concern is not focused so much on the possibility that public universities will turn private, but that these universities will lack resources to the extent that students would opt for private education instead. Private higher education is one of the main motivations of student movements to adopt radical-emancipatory practices. Students challenge the system's intentions to threaten higher education for all. Even though budget is a recognized tension in this organization, it is not the only one.

Another threat, highly controversial without a doubt, is the funding of graduate programs and technical programs at UNA. Currently, master's programs at UNA are more expensive than most similar programs in private universities. This contemporary understanding of education places it as a private good. This change in funding responds to assumptions that frame education as an individual financial investment rather than a public good from which the whole community benefits from an educated individual. The risk of this threat is not only the current high cost for students but also the normalization of the abandonment of the welfare state and the replacement of the notion of the higher education as a public good with personal responsibility for one's own welfare (Mintz, 2021).

When taking a closer look at possible tensions, I could identify the impact of Article 5 of the Organizational Statue on the philosophical perspectives expected from academia. This article is entitled Academic Freedom and recognizes the core principle of learning in this institution. It evokes for a framework of ethical and intellectual accountability of each professor and lists four main statements. The first of these statements relates to free expression of academic staff ruled by the Human Rights Declaration that guarantees no coercion. Second, there is a commitment to the development of academic programs with freedom of speech regarding philosophical, political, religious, scientific and didactic tenets. Third, the right to conduct individual and collective research for the university's and country's needs is articulated. Finally, the right to open debate under reciprocal respect, and without fear of reprisals is guaranteed (UNA, 2015). Being that Costa Rica a democratic nation, this article mirrors the underlying principle of freedom of speech every citizen is granted. In my analysis, statement two is the one that causes me some discomfort, because it suggests the possible clash between UNA's founding philosophical

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orientation and each professor's individual philosophical perspective. Based on this statement, faculty staff has no obligation to follow a specific philosophical perspective; on the contrary, they are free to line up with any philosophy.

That made me recall the behaviourist practices I witnessed as a student and instructor in this institution, and the perpetuation of liberal education that returns to a view of learning as a transmission of knowledge process that aligns with Freire's (2002) banking model. It is no surprise to me that these practices connect with the idea that the specialists should teach their specialization only since learners' technical, and vocational competence should take center stage.

Neoliberalism understood as a political doctrine and form of government that attains to the universalization of social relations through free market (Kallio et al., 2016; Nordbäck et al., 2022) and its impact to public higher education, more specifically UNA, has passed unnoticed for many. While neoliberal practices unarguably is a threat to UNA's social justice mission and values. When there is a shift from promoting solidarity actions with the less-favored and at-risk-of-exclusion social sectors to exploring and implementing actions with the student as customer as a vehicle for cost decrease, there is undoubtedly a change of commitment.

Final Remarks and Conclusions

In the introduction to this document, I suggested that I aimed at gaining understanding of the role of UNA in adult education in Costa Rica and, in so doing, reflect upon the philosophical perspectives that have driven this institution. Overall my conclusion is that, as time has passed, this institution has lost its driving humanistic perspective that was established in the first Organization Statute written in 1976 (UNA, 1976). It seems to be that liberal, behavioural, progressive, humanistic, and radical everyday practices can enter the classrooms as professors are free to frame their teaching under the philosophical orientation of their choice. Above all, Núñez, the founder of UNA, was a radical himself; he altered the system by providing higher education to people of all social statuses. Unfortunately, his philosophical orientation and goals for UNA are partially accomplished. There is an accessible education for all, but teaching and learning practices do not guarantee any commitment to social action and social reform. Currently, value is placed on teaching a specialization and providing tools to satisfy individual economic needs. The development of skilled workers that can meet economic demands seems to be the main target of some faculties. Not only that but the commodification of technical and masters programs is a direct menace to the foundational principle "education for all" as now it should read "education for all … who have the money to afford expensive programs."

The ongoing cutback in state funding for public university jeopardizes true democratization of education, but what causes me more discomfort is the idea that UNA students are being deprived of classroom experiences that would promote them to be socially responsible thinkers. Adult education in Costa Rica should not only aim at promoting skilled adult learners

but also at emphasizing the collective social change embodied by critical thinkers. On a final note, more discussion and research on the tension between UNA's mission (representing public higher education in this essay) and the marketization of programs should be done so that a close reading of who the forces promoting neoliberal processs are.

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