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REFLECTIONS

ON EDUCATION IN VALUES AT THE METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY OF ECUADOR

REFLEXIONES SOBRE LA EDUCACIÓN EN VALORES EN LA UNIVERSIDAD METROPOLITANA DEL ECUADOR

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ABSTRACT

In the educational field, the approach to values exhibits significant attention due to the complexities that are currently manifested and the challenges that values education imposes on university teachers. For this reason, a theoretical-conceptual analysis is carried out about values, their different meanings and typologies, axiology and the education offered; with the objective of bringing professors, researchers, students and other members of the university community of the Metropolitan University of Ecuador closer to these topics as a contribution to their gradual operationalization in university management processes. As a result, it is concluded that it is possible to promote education in values through the Teaching Career Program aimed at increasing the academic and scientific level of teachers and contributing to the training of professionals equipped with knowledge, skills and values to strengthen the awareness of their social and civic responsibilities; committed to the evaluation, interpretation and transformation of the educational, social, cultural, political and economic reality of the country.

Keywords:

Values, value judgment, axiology, education in values.

RESUMEN

En el ámbito educativo, el abordaje de los valores exhibe una significativa atención debido a las complejidades que se manifiestan en la actualidad y los retos que la educación en valores impone al docente universitario. Por ello, en el presente artículo se realiza un análisis teórico-conceptual acerca de los valores, sus diferentes acepciones y tipologías, la axiología y la educación que se ofrece con el objetivo de acercar a profesores, investigadores, estudiantes y demás miembros de la comunidad universitaria de la Universidad Metropolitana del Ecuador a estos temas como contribución a su operacionalización paulatina en los procesos de gestión universitaria. Como resultado, se concluye que es posible direccionar la educación en valores a través del Programa de Carrera Docente dirigido a incrementar el nivel académico y científico del profesorado y contribuir a la formación de profesionales provistos de conocimientos, capacidades y valores para afianzar la conciencia de sus responsabilidades sociales y cívicas; comprometidos con la evaluación, interpretación y transformación de la realidad educativa, social, cultural, política y económica del país.

Palabras clave:

Valores, juicio de valor, axiología, educación en valores.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, thousands of people suffer from fear, insecurity and injustices stemming from an uncertain political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental context that is complexified by war conflicts between nations or groups of them and that result in deaths, injuries, forced displacements and other evils such as: hunger, unemployment, inequalities, violence, organized crime, corruption and similar phenomena that threaten the aspirations of those who dream of the alternative of living in a world where peace and justice, respect for human beings and the environment prevail; plurality and tolerance are accepted and universal values are put into practice.

Education can contribute to the achievement of such noble aspirations, taking into account the statements of Valencia (2021), when stating that education in its broadest sense is expressed as a complex, holistic and dialectical process aimed at the formation of man by actors as diverse as the educational institution, the family and society, through teaching and learning activities, aimed at creating skills and competencies, as well as forming and consolidating values and beliefs. The same author argues that, through education, knowledge, experiences, and values are transmitted from one generation to another by means of oral communication, conventional training, research, among other means that, as a whole, constitute education and are manifested in actions, attitudes and personal behaviors that are reflected in the social environment where they are developed (Valencia, 2021).

The aforementioned, finds reception in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where the imperative need to provide a relevant and quality education, which is increasingly inclusive and equitable; which serves as a fundamental support to actions aimed at ensuring the achievement of others to promote values such as tolerance, solidarity, freedom, equality and democracy, which contribute to establish more peaceful and just societies (Marúm et al., 2023).

In the case of the Republic of Ecuador, the educational system is the result of the development of varied and complex socio-historical processes of the country, and capable of evolving in tune with the political, economic and social trends of the present (Espinoza, 2021); structured on a legal framework based on the Political Constitution of the Republic, promulgated in 2008. The current Constitution establishes that Ecuador is a constitutional State of rights and justice; among these are recognized the rights of people to education, health, employment, and other fundamental rights to ensure the subsistence and psychophysiological development of Ecuadorians, under the principle of Good Living or *sumak kwasay*, which supports values such as autonomy, respect, equality and freedom. Article 27 states that education ***“will be centered on the***

human being and will guarantee his or her holistic development, within the framework of respect for human rights, sustainable environment and democracy; participatory, compulsory, intercultural, democratic, inclusive and diverse”. (Ecuador. National Constituent Assembly, 2008).

In relation to the content of the constitutional text, the current national education system is made up of educational levels; among them, higher education; structured in the form of a system that articulates various institutions of higher education (IES) and is governed by the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES), a legal instrument that in correspondence with the Constitution, states that the Higher Education system has as its fundamental objective both academic and professional training, guided by a scientific and humanistic vision (Ecuador. National Assembly, 2018).

From the articles of the LOES, the importance of the university as an actor that provides academic and professional education provided with both science and humanism is interpreted and that to achieve maximum relevance in its Art. 9, states that ***“higher education is an indispensable condition for the construction of the right of Good Living, within the framework of interculturality, respect for diversity and harmonious coexistence with nature”***. (Espinoza, 2021, p. 18).

In this context, the university is seen as an institution of special character, due to its role in academic and professional education and its commitment to the formation, transmission and strengthening of values that will guide the professional practice of graduates and their performance in society throughout their lives. In this way, the university has ceased to be perceived as an isolated and relatively independent institution, to acquire relevance as a center for comprehensive training, research and development positioned in the surrounding environment (Espinoza, 2021).

From its initial stage to date, the Metropolitan University (METU), has included in its institutional mission core elements such as academic and professional education, the development of scientific research and the link with the social environment; in addition to ***“the search for truth, the promotion of values and fundamental rights, which support a pluralistic spirit and a multicultural character in its community”***. (Espinoza, 2021, p. 37)

The commitment of the Metropolitan University with the formation, transmission and strengthening of values is a principle that is ratified in the documents issued from the Institutional Statute of 2009. Thus, it was considered that the Metropolitan University will be the leader of the Ecuadorian university, promotes principles and values, seeks academic excellence, and provides its students with a critical and ethical training to strengthen awareness of their social and civic responsibilities. Unconditionally

committed to diagnose, evaluate, interpret, and transform the educational, social, cultural, political and economic reality of the country (Espinoza, 2021).

In 2023 the new Institutional Statute came into effect and in its Art. 4 establishes the new mission of the university. ***“The Metropolitan University trains competitive professionals, leaders, bearers of solid convictions and ethical and moral values, capable of undertaking actions in terms of national development planning and serving the Ecuadorian society, through the effective implementation of advances in science, technology and innovation following principles of sustainability”.***

According to Espinoza (2021), as a result of reforms to the LOES, carried out in 2018 and actions derived from the internal evaluation process and the monitoring of strategic planning; the Institutional Statute was updated, a document that as of 2019 proposed new institutional objectives and inserted them in the Educational and Pedagogical Model; among them is highlighted: “Values: To promote the dissemination and strengthening of the values of Ecuadorian society” (Espinoza, 2021, p. 13). The above was also considered in the reform of the Institutional Statute carried out in 2023, which establishes in Art. 6, paragraph d) the following: ***“The Metropolitan University has the following purposes, articulated to its educational and pedagogical model: d) Values. - To promote the dissemination and strengthening of the values of Ecuadorian society”.***

This end transversalizes the others, especially those referred to the development of universal thought, (item a); the dialogue between ancestral cultures, national culture and universal culture, (item c); training of socially responsible, ethical and supportive professionals, participants in the development of state institutions and respectful of democracy, (item e); the strengthening of the constitutional, unitary, secular, sovereign, independent and democratic character of the State; guarantor of law and justice in an intercultural and plurinational society, (clause h); providing a humanistic, intercultural, scientific and inclusive education (clause l) (Espinoza, 2021) (Espinoza, 2021).

In the Educational and Pedagogical Model of the Metropolitan University of Ecuador (2019), within the thematic axis dedicated to the axiological approach, the system of institutional values is defined, namely:

Proactivity: Understood as the responsibility to make things happen.

Entrepreneurship: Understood as the challenge of creating and developing new possibilities in the field of social development.

Solidarity: Understood as the commitment of the university community with itself and with the community.

Honesty: Understood as the perfect balance between knowledge, feeling, communication and action according to the values of truth and justice.

Responsibility: Understood as the ability to act freely in accordance with their duties in relation to their requirements and those of the environment.

Respect: Understood as the recognition of and compliance with institutional norms and policies.

Tolerance: Understood as respect for the diversity of opinions, thought, gender, culture, religion, trends and criteria; which enables a better coexistence for the university community and society.

Loyalty: Understood as fidelity to the principles, values and policies of the Metropolitan University.

Equal participation: Understood as the guarantee that METU offers to women and historically excluded groups so that they can participate at all levels and instances, especially in the government of METU (p.11-12). (p.11-12).

Although the system of institutional values is set out in the legal framework, in the Strategic Plan for Institutional Development (PEDI 2020-2025) and in other institutional documents, aspects such as: the formation, transmission or strengthening of values, the authors of this article consider that they are not sufficiently operationalized in practice, similar to what happens with the issue of inclusion by analogy, the criteria of Escudero & Martínez (2011); Espinoza & Socorro (2018), both cited in Espinoza (2021), could be taken into account. In this regard, this same author identifies that the insufficient operationalization of these principles constitutes one of the problems for universities in general, which is valid for METU, in particular.

This problem motivates the present contribution through which a theoretical-conceptual analysis is made on the different meanings and typologies of values, value judgment, axiology and values education with the aim of bringing teachers, researchers, students and other members of the university community, to these issues and contribute to its gradual operationalization in the processes that are part of university management. This result is associated with the institutional research project called ***“Education Quality Management”*** which is executed in the Education career, Guayaquil Matrix and responds to Program No. 5: Educational quality and innovation management for the improvement of socio-educational contexts, Line 2: Contribution to social development through the improvement of education, health, guarantees of rights and comprehensive security of the METU.

DEVELOPMENT

As explained in the introduction to this work, the university has the important task of training professionals, not only from the academic and professional point of view, but also from the axiological perspective that allows graduates to leave the university classrooms with the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for professional practice, able to reflect critically on social reality and to act responsibly and committed to their environment and with solid values that ensure their commitment to the development of the country and their responsibility to build a more just and equitable society.

It is undeniable that values have accompanied human beings, who have valued more or less abstract elements such as goodness, beauty, happiness, peace, justice and others whose value judgment has been transformed throughout history, following criteria and paradigms guided by customs, morals, ethics and many others, until reaching purely economic value judgments; which predominantly characterize the current consumer societies, where great value is generally assigned to an action or thing by its monetary expression (Brizuela et al., 2021).

In everyday life we frequently hear expressions related to values (especially moral values); however, it is observed that not all people are clear about the concept of values and make mistakes in judging the value of actions or things; which confirms the need to analyze theoretically the subject of values and other associated concepts in order to bring teachers, researchers, students and other members of the university community closer to these issues and contribute to their gradual operationalization in the processes of university management (Castro, 2022; Vásquez, 2023).

Values and their conceptualization

The concept of values is generally associated with the attitudes and behavior assumed by human beings to relate in society and make decisions. Etymologically speaking, the word value comes from the Latin *valere*, which means to be strong, powerful (Bosquez et al., 2022).

From the work of Hirsch (2005), it can be inferred that the concept of values involves dissimilar elements and meanings depending on the different points of view and theories with which they are treated. By way of example, this author explains that, from the humanist point of view, it is understood as an essential quality that distinguishes the human being from the rest of living beings; so essential that without it, the human condition or part of it would be lost, the human being would not be such, or simply would not exist; from this perspective, the implementation of values improves the humanity of the individual.

From the socio-educational point of view, values are considered references or paradigms that guide the conduct and behavior of each person or social group in the search for self-realization and the evolution of society.

From the perspective of philosophy, values are shaped in the human being from duty and being and acquire meanings from conscious activity, which also intervenes in the assimilation of values through experience and their practical materialization in everyday life. In this sense, it is believed that values are incorporated by individuals, but they are social constructs.

Regardless of the point of view adopted to address the content of the term values, three common characteristics are considered to guide the approach to the subject: 1) they apply to human beings, their attitudes and behavior, 2) they guide the conduct and behavior of each person or social group, 3) there are various types of values, and some are generally accepted as universal.

The existence of a varied typology of values has led to the identification of universal values, some of which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Universal values.

UNIVERSAL VALUES
Love
Freedom
Peace
Unity
Honesty
Respect
Solidarity
Justice
Cooperation

The criterion of Bosquez et al. (2022), regarding the constantly changing society and its influence on values, is valid; however, universal and human values tend to remain recognized by the community, from the natural recognition of each of its members who accept the value as something related to their own existence that influences behavior, shapes ideas and inclines the feelings of each person; in this sense, they state that the family is the primary actor where the set of human and universal values is made known, starting from the most essential ones for coexistence.

These authors maintain that *“values are virtues, qualities and a general guide to conduct, naturally formed in the process of human interaction”* (Bosquez et al., 2022, p. 32); there is agreement regarding the guiding character of values determined by their social relationship; however, it is not accepted to equate values with virtues, because

although they are closely related, their conceptualizations involve differences.

Appealing to the studies of Hirsch (2005), philosophically speaking, it is possible to affirm that values are paradigms, beliefs and ideals of "ought to be" that are accepted by general consensus in a given society; on the other hand, virtues refer to a positive quality that is associated with willpower and sustained effort to act in a manner consistent with acquired values, it can be said that virtues imply a usual and stable predisposition to behave well in the personal, family and social context.

In order to avoid confusion, it should be clarified that ethics and morality are concepts associated with each other and with values and virtues, although they have different meanings. From a philosophical perspective, ethics deals with the study and foundation of the moral values that guide the behavior of the individual in society; therefore, it is said that ethical behavior is the expression of conduct that is attached to morality (Barker, 1995).

Also from the philosophical perspective, morality refers to the customs, norms and consensus constituted by each society and that are embedded in the subconscious of the person, constituting the ideals or worldview that the person builds during his or her life (Barker, 1995; Pérez et al., 2023). Barker (1995), agrees with Hirsch (2005); and (Brizuela et al. (2021), in considering that morality is intimate, personal, composed of values introduced from early ages that, due to their general and consensual nature, are practically indisputable.

These customs, norms and consensus (values) are invigorated implicitly and constantly with contents present in interpersonal and family communication, including the mass media (Barker, 1995).

Axiology: the science that studies values

From the works of Barker (1995) and Hirsch (2005), we derive the existence of a science or branch of knowledge whose object of study is values: Axiology; also known as theory of values, since it focuses both on studying the nature and basis of values (strictly speaking), as well as valuations or value judgments.

From the etymological point of view, the word axiology comes from the Greek root *axios*, whose meaning is valuable, appreciable, conjugated with the root *logos* which means word, science, treatise; so that axiology should be understood as the science that studies values, basing its essence and typology, as well as the process of valuation or value judgments.

Meanwhile, Bosquez et al. (2022), state that, due to the intense theoretical debates to explain values, axiology was born in the nineteenth century, as a branch of philosophy aimed at substantiating their nature and the guidelines of

valuations or value judgments. Brizuela et al. (2021) report that axiology is related to other sciences that include values as a category of study, among them they mention sociology, psychology, and pedagogy, although Barker (1995) and Hirsch (2005) state that in one way or another they are related to the sciences, since they all take certain values as a starting point to build their theoretical foundations.

The latter authors agree that there is no single axiological current, as in Bosquez et al. (2022), who consider that values and value judgments are initially born with a specific meaning, however, they are transformed or extinguished in different periods; that is, values and valuations are the result of the changes and evolutions experienced by human beings in their historical evolution. From their respective works, we can deduce the existence of axiological currents, such as:

- » The neo-Kantian school: for its followers, values constitute principles, norms or ideals (which they classify as relative and absolute) external to the conscience and which are expressed in culture as a result of a complex process of assimilation. This school is based on the ethical position of the philosopher Kant, for whom personal conduct is inspired by values outside the conscience, put into practice by conscious will, in such a way that they can be universally accepted.
- » Austrian school: the followers of this axiological current (also known as logical psychologism), consider that values depend on the criterion of the individual who makes the value judgment; that is, values are expressed in the individual, in correspondence with the valuation he makes of a given action or thing. From a subjectivist perspective, the perceptions of the individual are privileged, and experiences and reason are magnified, which are based on the "I" and place values in dependence on psychological processes such as the perceptions and emotions of the individual.
- » The existentialist school: its followers try to explain values on the basis of abstractions and experiences about human existence, excluding the supernatural meaning of the generally accepted set of values. In this sense, they state that the individual (as a human being) must face his existence with absolute responsibility in all personal, family and social aspects.
- » Phenomenological school: the followers of this axiological current start from phenomenology as an experience of consciousness, as a complex psychological process focused on explaining the essence of the phenomenon, by means of the integral analysis of the phenomenon itself, discarding symbolisms and previous conditioning. Values (considered phenomena) are a reflection of reality in the consciousness of the individual.
- » The school of value realism: for its followers, values are rooted in the individual, they are real and inherent to the identity of the individual; in other words, values are

shaped in the individual in terms of “*duty*” and “*being*”. They are based on the fundamental idea “*what is real is what has been*” and on that basis, they promote the theory of values based on a general metaphysics, whose method of study is dialectics and essentially states that values are shaped by the conscience and acquire meaning for the individual in correspondence with his experiences and his practical realization in life in society.

In this regard, Brizuela et al. (2021), highlight the link between the evolution of society and the significance it confers to values in a certain period of its historical development; which can explain the coexistence of traditional values, cultural customs, religious principles and others from past times, generally shared by modern society; together with more recent values such as equality, inclusion, peace and social justice, as well as respect for the environment (Conopoima, 2021).

Independently of one or another axiological current, there are positions that delimit the trends when dealing with values as a concept and valuations or value judgments, so that two fundamental positions can be identified: subjectivist and objectivist positions.

The subjectivist positions, such as the neo-Kantian school, the Austrian school or logical psychologism, essentially state that the absolute and indisputable truth is that which emanates from individual experience or from the considerations of each person; which induces to believe in personal experiences and considerations, defending what are considered values (from the subjective point of view), without taking into account the reality of the social-historical (Brizuela et al., 2021).

According to Pérez et al. (2023), subjectivist positions are very frequently observed nowadays, since by postulating that values lack intrinsic validity and that it is people who confer them a certain value, depending on their positive or negative perception, causes each person to establish their own particular scale of values and defend their own values, ignoring real values shared by a group or society; so, this can explain the differences in intergenerational and family values (Brizuela et al., 2021; Bosquez et al., 2022); environmental values (Conopoima, 2021); and social values (Pérez et al., 2023); and the growing interest in economic profit and mercantilism.

In contrast, objectivist positions, such as the school of value realism, consider values as part of objective reality and, therefore, everything that exists has its own value; reality is as it is, regardless of the criteria or estimates of each person. In this line of thought, it is assured that values are real because they rest in the very nature of the human being; but it is also recognized that there is a dose of subjectivism in the complex process by which the person acquires his knowledge and makes his value judgment,

this dialectical combination between the objective and the subjective, in no way should be confused with the postulates of subjectivism (Pérez et al., 2023).

Objectivist positions include the analysis of each historical and social context, without ignoring the complex individual psychic processes in the knowledge and judgment of values; therefore, from these positions it is possible to understand the existence of the value of peace, although conflicts exist, or that justice maintains its value, despite the existence of unjust persons or events.

These reasons should be sufficient to propose the insertion of values and other associated concepts in the processes of university management (Castro, 2022); promoting the participation of professors, researchers, students and other members of the METU community and, under the ideals of the school of realism, implementing education in values, together with the formation of professionals equipped with competencies and social responsibility (Vásquez, 2023).

Education in values: an imperative need

In the specialized literature consulted, expressions such as education, training, instruction, transmission and strengthening of values in people, especially in students, are observed; however, it seems appropriate to analyze initially the expressions education and instruction.

The concept of education makes us think of teaching and learning processes both of knowledge or academic content, as well as values; directed to the integral development of students; in this sense, it seems wise to reaffirm that “*education is a learning process through which diverse knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits for life are acquired*”. (Bosquez, et al., 2022, p. 31).

From the works of Conopoima (2021); Brizuela et al. (2021); Bosquez et al. (2022); and Pérez et al. (2023); it is inferred the existence of values education, as a category derived from general education, in whose nature is the transmission of values, in order to promote the moral growth of students, so that “values education provides the indicators by which each person will then channel their life project”. (p. 38); furthermore, they express that a good education is the one that transmits good values.

This inference acquires greater meaning when returning to Valencia (2021), for whom education is “*a complex feedback process, whose most notorious activities are the teaching of a wide range of knowledge and its apprehension (learning) aimed at creating skills, forming and consolidating values, habits and beliefs*” (p. 3); which according to Marúm et al. (2023), is key to achieving the SDGs related to the reduction of poverty and inequalities, the promotion of tolerance and the construction of more peaceful societies.

Regarding the expression instruction, Valencia (2021), based on previous studies by renowned educators, concludes that *“instruction is the process that results in training people in a certain branch of human knowledge”* (p. 11), explaining that instruction is a subsidiary process of education, in the broadest sense of the definition.

Therefore, it is preferred to speak of training, transmission and strengthening of values, mentioned indistinctly in research works and in various documents that are part of the national and institutional legal framework, to refer to values education.

According to Bosquez et al. (2020), values education is a process of assimilation as principles that guide the behavior and actions of students. According to their criteria, values education tends to humanize, because although the category of *“human being”* is acquired at birth, from the earliest ages, values such as humanism, solidarity and many others of a social or moral nature are learned through education, recognizing that *“in a society as complex and plural as ours, value systems are also very diverse”*. (p. 32)

According to Brizuela et al. (2021), values education is a dynamic and complex process that intervenes in the formation of the personality; not exempt from contradictions, taking into account the historical and social conditions of the environment in which it develops. For these authors, values education is a “category” of general education that refers to the process of moral and cultural feedback between generations, where the young generation assimilates the cultural heritage of the previous generation, in the center of which are moral values.

Values education is a process of assimilation of paradigms in constant learning by people, influenced by the reality of the historical and social development of the context; which can be carried out by formal or informal teaching means, focused on guiding social coexistence based on principles and personal and collective values; as a contribution to the primary objective of providing a comprehensive training (Brizuela et al., 2021).

From the work of Pérez et al. (2023), it is inferred that values education is closely related to the very existence of each person, since it influences their ideas, behavior, feelings and ways of acting. They also argue that values education is a process of continuous improvement, which contributes to the sustainability of the quality of the teaching and learning process, as well as of pre-professional practices.

The aforementioned authors coincide in considering education in values as a process in which different social actors intervene, such as the family, the school, the community, the mass media and others; they also agree in affirming that the family is the primary actor in education,

within which fundamental values are formed and transmitted, in accordance with the realities of the social context; although they point out that education in values is not only the responsibility of family members, but also of neighbors, religious leaders, teachers, students, as well as leaders and members of society.

In relation to the above, Conopoima (2021), proposes the need to strengthen education in environmental values, considering the participation of *“families, educational centers, State institutions, non-governmental organizations and the media”* (p. 85) as essential to raise awareness and influence the increase in aggressiveness, violence, citizen insecurity and the depredation of natural ecosystems.

Each of the actors must ensure that the process of educating in values is adequately planned, channeled and controlled, because it is not something spontaneous or improvised, but a series of systematic, coherent and articulated activities among the participants in them; The participants must motivate the students to want to do and feel as their own what they do, so that what they observe or do corresponds to their feelings and behavior; that is, they consciously commit themselves to the activities carried out by the family, the school or any other actor in society (Brizuela et al., 2021); with these agree Bosquez et al. (2022), when they say that “educating in values is due to previously planned, oriented action.” (p. 33)

Values education is part of the strategic and operational planning of METU, from the inclusion of the institutional values system in institutional guiding documents such as the Institutional Statute, the PEDI 2020-2025 and in the Educational and Pedagogical Model; however, taking into account its innovative and flexible character, the postulates of values education should be operationalized in the design of pedagogical and didactic strategies aimed at strengthening collaboration and teamwork among teachers, researchers and students.

For this purpose, it is essential to take into account that teachers are the most responsible for establishing a clear and fluid communication with students and introducing the necessary adjustments in the content during the teaching and learning process or practical activity; taking into consideration personal or group characteristics, such as social status, family environment or other important aspects that influence the formation, transmission or strengthening of values; an essential part for the comprehensive training of future professionals (Pérez et al., 2023).

METU has a Teaching Career Program (PCD) as part of the institutional policies for faculty development. The conception of this program focuses on the continuity of training from diagnosis with a personalized approach, which guarantees the professional development of the university professor to achieve the intermediate goals of

teacher training until obtaining the scientific degree (Rojas Valladares & Soria León, 2016).

In the PCD, pedagogical professionalization is conceived as a continuous process that, attending to the different organized stages, will facilitate the training, formation and improvement of practicing teachers. The difficulties that will appear in the course of directing the teaching-learning process acquire complex characteristics due to the nature of didactics and the substantive processes of higher education and must be dealt with the appropriate knowledge. Therefore, the preparation received in the performance as a university teacher is important, in order to, in a timely manner, address the teaching-learning process of students by adopting strategic decisions, as well as to be able to explain the fundamentals that support their pedagogical and didactic practice in a coherent manner, from the problems faced in their professional role (Rojas Valladares & Soria León, 2016).

Also, professionalization is considered in the area of knowledge of the teacher's practice with updating and deepening cycles. In this sense, it is conceived as a continuous process, from the consideration of their professional practice, in light of the dynamics in the scientific-technological field, in pedagogy and didactics, which requires a high level to assume these changes in an innovative way. That is why it requires systemic actions as a process that responds to their professional work (Rojas Valladares & Soria León, 2016).

One way to promote and improve values education in the educational context of UMET would be the inclusion of specific activities on values education in the annual planning of the PCD in the area of pedagogical professionalization and in the area of the teacher's knowledge, starting with careers related to medical sciences and law; to extend them progressively to the rest of the careers that make up the academic offer of METU. These activities should be structured on the basis of the institutional value system and may take the form of courses, workshops, seminars, methodological activities and academic and scientific events.

According to the experiences of Pérez et al. (2023), the activities can be developed through classes or other organizational forms of the teaching and learning process aimed at the acquisition of knowledge, the deployment of skills and the formation/transmission/strengthening of values, whose maximum potential is achieved by fostering the leading role of students in three fundamental dimensions:

- » Responsibility: strengthen commitment and conscious participation in curricular and extracurricular activities.
- » Autonomy: is aware of his responsibility and motivated in the construction of his own knowledge, giving them meaning, from his mental processing and connection

with cognitive structures and previous experiences. This allows him/her to accomplish activities and objectives independently.

- » Participation in the decision-making process: interaction between students, teachers and researchers facilitates the proposal of solutions and decision making based on a cognitive foundation.

In Pérez et al. (2023), it is stated that visible results can be obtained in the short term, by means of persuasion, student participation in their self-education and the maintenance of good interpersonal relationships in which trust and mutual respect prevail.

CONCLUSIONS

There is an abundant theoretical framework of reference on the treatment of values, as well as a solid legal and institutional framework that allows the operationalization of values education at the Metropolitan University of Ecuador in correspondence with its institutional mission. Values education is part of METU's strategic and operational planning, since the inclusion of the institutional values system in the Institutional Statute, the PEDI 2020-2025 and in the Educational and Pedagogical Model. However, aspects such as: the formation, transmission or strengthening of values are not sufficiently operationalized in practice, which demands priority attention in the field of teacher professionalization and its impact on the formation process of the university professional.

Based on these arguments, it is considered that one way to promote values education at METU could be through the planning of activities conceived in the PCD in the area of pedagogical professionalization and in the area of the teacher's knowledge. In this way, an answer can be given to the problem faced by teachers related to how to educate in values and guarantee, from the axiological perspective, the improvement of the role of teachers in the formation of competitive professionals, leaders, bearers of solid convictions and values that are capable of taking action in terms of national development planning and serve the Ecuadorian society aware of their social responsibility.

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