

LAWS FOR SCIENCE, GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLE

In all of Latin America we talk and talk about the regulations that rule all activities, including those concerning science, technology and innovation. From Constitutions (the Fundamental Laws of the nations, of which in one case an average of one every six years has been enacted in barely 200 years of republican existence) down to particular bylaws for every activity are enacted.

In several countries, laws have been passed that regulate specifically the scientific and technological activity. In Venezuela, a champion country in changing constitutions, one of such laws was enacted in the year 2005. It was modified in 2010 in order that the government would have full control over the revenues and their destiny. Currently, the new National Assembly discusses a new project to reform said law. With the same or an even higher ease rules are changed, whether they are laws or bylaws about the adscription of an entity to a governmental department, or about the operation and management of the institutions dedicated to scientific activities.

In practically all the countries of the region the scientific community succeeded more than half a century ago in establishing Associations for the Advancement of Science in order to promote the development of their guild. Several decades ago the establishment of National Councils for Science and Technology so as to regulate the governmental action in the area was also attained. In some countries full flash cabinet departments were set up and in others, such as Chile, the community claims currently for its establishment, with the goal of satisfying the widely felt need of having a voice at the highest level of government decisions. However, not in all countries where cabinet departments in charge of the sector have been installed have they been effective in developing it.

In some cases they do, and in other cases they don't. This is not necessarily a door to progress and wellbeing. It can be a door towards the state domination of autonomous groups or of those that are not inclined to please governments nor share their inclinations and political or group preferences.

Neither the ministries nor the councils nor the associations nor the laws and by-laws, nor the rules that regulate the institutions necessarily achieve their goals just because they exist. It is the people, people that through their effort produces science and technology, whether investigating, applying it, teaching or administrating are those who succeed in producing and diffusing new knowledge for the benefit of all. It is the human resources, the men and women that with their intelligence, training and good will, move countries forward.

It is the people who are in the laboratories, in the offices, in the services; in the institutions as well as in the enterprises and in the government, at all levels. It is society at large who has to become fully conscious of the importance of progress and thus provide the needed mechanisms for it to take place.

There is only one road to this end, apart from the individual leadership that once in a while shines, but which can not be fabricated and does not always lead in the right direction. It is the road of the uninterrupted training of human resources that, at same the time that are highly prepared for their specific jobs, have an integral humanistic education that allows them to understand the social and ethical aspects of that which constitutes their way of life and that they do day after day.

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