

PROSOCIALITY, SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE, AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: A CALL FROM LATIN AMERICA

In times of uncertainty, when the excess of information seems to obscure what is truly essential in community life, universities once again take a central place in the public debate. Not only because of their role in creating knowledge, but because they have the responsibility to train those who will make decisions that influence individual and collective life.

However, this mission becomes insufficient if it is limited only to technical knowledge or disciplinary expertise. Today, higher education institutions are called upon to form people capable of acting with empathy, solidarity, dignity, and a sense of social justice.

Prosociality is one of the capacities that universities must cultivate with conviction. It implies helping without expecting a reward, collaborating without obligation, recognizing another's suffering, and choosing to accompany rather than ignore. Evidence shows that this type of conduct strengthens community bonds and is directly associated with better levels of physical and mental health.

Complementary to this, spiritual intelligence – understood as the capacity to find meaning and purpose, to ask “why” rather than only “how” – influences how people face pain, make decisions, and construct their moral identity.

It is surprising that prosociality and spiritual intelligence still do not occupy a central place in university practice. In many cases, a management model prevails that focuses on productivity indicators, accreditations, rankings, or administrative efficiency. Although these elements are important to guarantee quality standards, they become problematic when they displace the essence of the university mission: the integral development of the person.

In Latin America, this challenge becomes especially concrete. The region faces persistent inequalities, access gaps, limitations in science funding, and increasing pressure to demonstrate productivity under imported evaluation models. Latin American university governance must take this context into account, because forming agents of change in our countries cannot rely solely on short-term measurable results, but on strategic decisions that promote social well-being and sustainable development. *Interciencia*, since its foundation, has sustained precisely this conviction: to promote Latin American science that contributes to sustainable human development, beyond metrics and rankings.

Governing a university is not only about managing resources or planning budgets. It is about making decisions that affect the lives of students, scholars, workers, and communities; it is about defining which values are prioritized, which are negotiated, and which are not for sale. Thinking about governance from prosociality and spiritual intelligence implies favoring decision-making processes centered on meaning, dialogue, and the common good. A university that does not listen, that manages without reflection or dialogue, weakens its social legitimacy and fragments its own institutional ecosystem.

Transformation does not depend solely on new regulations or committees. It begins, above all, with the style of leadership. Institutions require authorities who are technically competent but also morally conscious: with self-knowledge, humility, and the capacity to listen. Leading from spiritual intelligence means understanding that authority is not imposed, but built from coherence and service.

Likewise, including a course on ethics, sustainability, or social responsibility is not enough to ensure the formation of integral professionals. It is necessary to review methodologies, learning experiences, and training contexts that allow prosociality and spiritual intelligence to be integrated into each discipline, to integrate prosociality and spiritual intelligence into each discipline. Knowledge without conscience may be useful, but not necessarily good. Forming experts without empathy may make institutions more efficient, but also more dehumanized.

Universities must transcend their own walls, and not only conduct research to produce articles, but to transform lives. This implies committing to real problems: poverty, mental health, environmental crisis, loneliness, and exclusion. It is not a matter of idealizing or demanding perfection, but of remembering the essence of its existence: to be a space where one thinks and also feels; where teaching occurs, but also where learning to live together takes place. Prosociality and spiritual intelligence are not decorative additions or ephemeral discourses, but necessary conditions for higher education to remain an act of hope and the construction of a sustainable future.

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