

FEU: Pool of Development in Cuba

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Students have been showing their disposition, commitment and devotion towards the transformations that have been present in Higher Education from 2009 onwards, and the present Federation of University Students (FEU) is an organization that has a great power in schools, and it's actively present in every change implemented with its contribution of renewal, criteria and responsibility.

The Minister of High Education Dr. Rodolfo Alarcón Ortiz made the above statement during the last meeting of the National Council of the FEU, where the analysis of the impact of the transformations in Higher Education, its impact on the students and how the organization can contribute to the constant updating of the Cuban University, were topics for the debate.

Detailed information about the changes that universities have experienced p to the present, was given during the meeting, presided over by the Vice-President of the Council of State and Ministers José Ramón Machado Ventura.

For his part, the head of the Ministry of Higher Education said that integration is a strengthening process that allows a better use of the resources, and it makes the university stronger through the fulfillment of its first mission: having graduates ready in all spheres.

He said that quality has been on the increase in Cuban Higher Education, and that there is room for improvement in other areas like English language teaching, the duration of the courses, the modification of the syllabus, entering pedagogical courses, and the way of recognizing the skills acquired by the students in courses carried out outside the universities.

Alarcón Ortiz said that the Cuban people have to continue working for graduating the real graduate that Cuba needs, who have been receiving civic, patriotic, esthetic training, who have political commitment with the Revolution; and who contribute, from the professional practice, to a better social performance in the difficult situation Cuban is facing.

He noted that requirements for entering university have been modified, and this conveys more academic efficiency; the senate of professors is reaching higher levels of qualification, with higher pedagogical command, and the university infrastructure is being gradually recovering. At the same time, there is a positive increase of computer means, in equipment and connectivity.

The minister highlighted that professors and students, supported by political and mass organizations, have to participate in unity in the fulfillment of the objectives drawn out, and working in coordination, because the base has been receiving more possibilities for the eradication of immobilization, and having a substantial increase in the quality and relevance in the Cuban teaching.

The Student's Voice

Several student leaders shared their impressions about the results and deficiencies in the changes that have been carried out in Higher Education, mainly in the integration of the universities. Thus, students who are studying in integrated schools and from other schools offered their opinions.

The President of the FEU in the University in Matanzas Damián Dickinson said that the integrated university has been reaching good results, however an organization in better correspondence with the present times, which supports and will be involved in the new changes is necessary.

The presidents of the University in Camagüey and the Higher Institute of Technology and Applied Sciences Claudia Proenza de Miranda and Josiel Barrios Cossío respectively, recognized that the process has not been exempted from some resistance, mainly at the beginning, when it was necessary the exchange about that measure between students and professors.

Students from the Medical Science Universities said that although these universities do not take part in the integration, they are really absorbed by the changes for fulfilling a better quality in the services and medical care, and the FEU is playing an important role in this, mainly because of the participation of the FEU in community interventions related to Public Health.

These matters and others that are part of the Pensamiento project, a strategy that the FEU developed after its 8th Congress, will continue in debate in the coming academic year, first in the brigades and afterward in every faculty, venues, divisions and schools for concluding in an Expanded National Council that will take place at the end of January 2016. This is a broad process for the debate and discussion for the review and assessment of the fulfillment of every agreement reached at the FEU Congress held in 2013.

Education has to continue being consolidated

Machado Ventura said, after sharing different anecdotes from his time as a student at Medicine School and as Minister for Public Health at the beginning of the Revolution when many transformations were brewed, and that every topic debated has to be carefully understood. He noted that the most important work is coming, which is that of achieving reproducing what was said in the Council, so that every person knows about it.

«We are living a good moment and we have to prepare ourselves better than ever before, we have to be informed, and for that, we have to use new technologies which makes the acquisition of more knowledge possible, » said Machado Ventura, and he added that it's necessary to have a good command of the technique to be updated.

He highlighted that the fulfillment of these objective is possible, perhaps economic limitations hinder that purpose at present; but we cannot put it off, and we are working on these matters. In this regard, education has to continue being consolidated as well as the position education has in the different sceneries at present.

He also said that never before has the following up of the agreements from a congress been as constant as in the case of the FEU.

So, he highlighted the leading role of the FEU that gathers together the vanguard in the scientific-technological,

productive and engineering development that the Cuban society needs, as well as future leaders, not only political leaders but also leaders in the different production centers.

The New National Secretariat

The voting results for electing the members of the National Secretariat of the FEU were made known during the plenary and final session of the Council. This process took place last Friday for the first time after the 8th Congress approved its celebration every two years, through direct and secret ballot.

Thus, the fifth-year student of Pedagogy-Psychology Jennifer Bello Martínez and the third-year student of Economics Yordan Bango Porro were elected for the positions of president and vice president of the FEU respectively. Both students were members of the Secretariat.

For the position of president of the Continental Latin-American and Caribbean Organization of Students (OCLAE) Heidi Laura Villuendas Ortega was elected; as ideologist Aníbal Barredo Acosta; organizer Luis Ramón Campo Yumar ; Luis Ángel González Calderón was elected for taking care of Communication and Alejandro Mesa Muro was elected for the International Relations position.

Other Secretariat members are Claudia Figueroa Gutiérrez and Daniel Velásquez Torres, the first was ratified for holding relations with the Public Health Ministry, while Velásquez Torres holds the relations with the Higher Education Ministry; Wilber Sánchez Castellanos will work at Sports; Claudia Proenza de Miranda for Research; Dayana Santrayll Fonseca for Teaching and Wendy Toledo García in Culture.

On behalf of the entire secretariat, the new president of the FEU ratified the commitment that the organization is taking on the representation of the interests of the students, and in continuing developing the work of the organization, mainly now, when there are many things to do during this broad process of discussion after the Congress in order to carry out an assessment of what the organization has been doing and achieved during the last two years.

Likewise, the Council bid farewell to some of its members and members of the National Secretariat like former President and Vice-president Yosvani Alberto Montano Garrido and Arianna Guerra respectively, who finished in their functions after graduating from university. Machado Ventura praised the work of all of them, and he also congratulated the new board of directors elected.

Translated by ESTI
