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THE PROCESS OF VALIDATING POSTGRADUATE DEGREES ISSUED ABROAD IN COLOMBIA

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to provide relevant information about the different issues surrounding the process of validating postgraduate degrees issued abroad in Colombia. To this end, the concept of validation is defined, and the differences between the criteria set forth in the Resolutions of 2015, 2017 and 2019 are explained. Moreover, particular cases of universities that have been affected by the change in regulations in the country are presented. Finally, some impressions of students who have been harmed socio-emotionally and financially as a result of a denied validation of their degrees are included. This research applied a qualitative methodology; the documentary analysis technique allowed the consideration of undergraduate works, journal papers, among others. For this purpose, a data collection log was used as an instrument, allowing the organization and classification of information. Results show that there is no legal certainty for students of higher education abroad; likewise, denials of validation are more common among career-appointed teachers and health practitioners, which has a significant impact on their work and, therefore, their life plans. The conclusions reveal that, as of today, even though response times of the Ministry of Education regarding the decisions of the validation processes are faster, the underlying problem persists, since the regulations establish standardized and homogeneous criteria, but in reality, said criteria are applied unevenly, heterogeneously and without motivation.

Keywords: Validation of degrees, study abroad, bilateral agreement, higher education institute..

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INTRODUCTION

Human resources are a key element in the development of society, even more so when they have high-level quality training because it provides a series of skills such as capacity of analysis and competencies in different areas of knowledge, to investigate needs and to consequently solve problems at local, national and international levels through research.

The steep increase in studies is noteworthy in this globalized world; that statement concurs with Botero, Velez and Munera (2020), who state that “postgraduate studies have become a relevant and differentiating factor in the field of higher education (...) student demand is booming in the world (Colombia is no exception)” (p.70). This implies that for citizens who have undertaken studies in universities abroad, such degrees must be recognized through a validation process in the country where

they want to work, in this specific case, Colombia. Accordingly, there are multiple definitions of validation that will be discussed below.

The dictionary of the Real Academia Española (s.f.) defines the term validation as the act of confirming or revalidating something, especially a legal act. Giving academic validity to studies approved in a certain place, such as a country or institution, in another. In this sense, for the validation process to take place, studies need to have been passed at an acknowledged foreign institution. In this regard, the Ministry of National Education, MEN (2019), states that validation “is the acknowledgement that the Ministry of National Education makes of a higher education degree granted by a legally authorized institution in the country of origin” (p.1).

In other words, validation of degrees issued abroad gives such studies the same legal and academic effects in Colombia as those obtained when studying at a national higher education institution, thus allowing graduates to perform in different specialties or to obtain better salaries. This is consistent with the definition issued by the Council of State on the validation of degrees in the MEN (2015), which states that it is a “procedure to ensure the academic suitability of students who obtained academic degrees abroad, which involves a legality exam and an academic examination of the studies conducted” (p.1). The intention of this article is to show an overview of the process of validating postgraduate degrees in Colombia, some of its characteristics and the problems that have arisen after changes in the resolutions in a few years, affecting a large number of citizens.

METHOD

Without a doubt, research methodology is one of the most important sections in a scientific paper. In that sense, Duque and Diaz (2020) assert that it must have a logical structure of the research process, framed in the stated objectives, in addition to accounting for the way in which the data was organized and analyzed, aspects to which this study aspires.

The research herein followed a methodology that responds to a qualitative approach, which helps understand a social reality from the point of view of people, as described by certain situations. In this particular case, of people in the process of validating higher education degrees issued abroad in Colombia; for this purpose, the technique of documentary analysis was used, essentially on the various resolutions pertaining to the subject that have been enacted since 2015. In addition, a review was also conducted on relevant papers containing the descriptors or keywords in this article, essentially on validation resolutions in Colombia, higher education studies abroad, bilateral agreements for the acknowledgement of higher education studies and the effects of denied validation of studies by the Colombian Ministry of Education.

A data collection log made in Microsoft Office Word was used as an instrument to collect information, it included a table to organize information found through bibliographic searches in different digital magazine repositories, such as Dialnet and Scielo, among other specialized

publications; it also included the regulations related to this research and then proceed with a much easier and more agile analysis of the data. The most important information in this data collection log is title, author, year of publication, summary and conclusions. Finally, after considering approximately 67 results, the sample was narrowed down to 36 documents or sources of information. Mostly texts from 2015 to 2021 were consulted, which contributed valuable information on the object of study. The language of this research was Spanish.

RESULTS

From Resolution 06950 of 2015 to Resolution 010687 of 2019

The process of validating higher education degrees issued abroad in Colombia has had many changes in only five years. First of all, it should be noted that the issuance of Resolution 06950 of 2015 did generate criticisms and complications for citizens, especially those who were studying abroad and about to graduate or had already obtained their degree and were planning to submit it to the validation process in the country.

The aforementioned contrasts with what happened in 2016. After a nationwide controversy over the death of many women in operating rooms at the hands of plastic surgeons, the National Government – through the Ministry of Education – started focusing on people with this specialty who had studied abroad. It found some cases in which a group of people had had their studies abroad in Universidad Veiga del Almeida (Brazil) validated. Yet the completion time was under two years, that is, two less than in Colombia, where those studies usually take over four years. Francisco Sales Puccini, a student at that university, claims that: “the lack of access to professional training led him to submit a project to create the specialty in aesthetic plastic surgery in Colombia to three universities since 2006. Every time his attempt was blocked by threats and obstacles from other professionals, this is what encouraged students to go train in Brazil” (Opinionysalud, 2016).

Due to the aforementioned issue, the Colombian Minister of Education at that time, Gina Parody, decided to adjust the process of validating degrees issued abroad. Thus, Resolution 20797 was issued in October 2017, which led to many problems: the process turned slow, even though one of its main goals was to be more efficient in response times. Starting with the payment and submission of documents, to the final decision issued as a resolution denying or granting all the academic and legal effects in Colombia to the degree – equating it to those issued by Colombian higher education institutions under Law 30 of 1992. Referring to said law, Castaño and Garcia (2012), cited in Figueroa, Encinas, Felix and Vega (2019), propose “tasks such as: quality evaluation; promotion and development of higher education; surveillance and control” (p.73).

To establish the changes that arose between Resolution 06950 of 2015 and Resolution 20797 of 2017, it is enough to review the criteria used

for the validation of degrees. The first one applies the following criteria: program or institution accredited in the country of origin, similar case and academic evaluation; the second (the 2017 Resolution) basically follows the same criteria, but the similar case is called administrative precedent instead. Yet fundamental changes took place in the conditions to apply these criteria, essentially the latter, the administrative precedent.

Resolution 20797 toughened up the conditions to validate the degrees with regard to the criterion of administrative precedent, which states that if studies have been previously evaluated, the same decision that served as a reference will be applied. In order to first assess a degree issued by a foreign university, particularly from studies in academic programs that are unknown to the Colombian Ministry of Education, an academic evaluation is carried out.

Following abundant criticism, Resolution 10687 of October 9th, 2019 was issued. It was expected to improve response times, to enhance the process' traceability and the observations made in denied validations – often lacking solid arguments. However, progress was evinced only in the implementation of a virtual platform that allowed the user to track the process and in improved response times. Yet key problems persisted, for instance, the denial of degrees that had been previously validated and the lack of clear and objective criteria in the application of the academic evaluation criterion.

The Validation Process Using the Academic Evaluation Criterion

The agency in charge of studying the degrees is the CONACES (Comision Nacional Intersectorial de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educacion Superior), it provides support to the process of evaluating and validating higher education degrees (Fodesep, 2020). Its mission is to verify if the degree by a higher education institution abroad is equivalent to a Colombian degree. To do so, it must assess some aspects that are set forth in point 3 of Article 11 of Resolution 20797 of 2017, as follows: it performs a comprehensive technical analysis of these aspects: i) Level of training; ii) Academic workload; iii) Graduation profile; iv) Purpose of training or outcome of learning, and v) Correspondence with the level of training leading to the degree. Likewise, Estrada (2018) describes it as follows:

Academic evaluation is the competence of the MEN to examine each degree through academic experts (CONACES, guilds, higher education institutions, among others) which issue a concept in terms of the equivalence or nonequivalence of degrees issued abroad with those granted in Colombia regarding number of credits, acquired competences, research developed, etc. (p.39)

In other words, a complete academic exam. In the case of master's degrees and doctorates, a summary format containing the following aspects is requested, including degree; objectives; research question, problem or hypothesis; population; methodology; conclusions; results or recommendations. To this end, according to Acosta and Stefos (2021), the CONACES has “academic experts (academic peers) who are organized in evaluation rooms according to areas of knowledge, (...) the

academic peers assess and validate minimum quality conditions” (p.57). Noticeably, these are not evaluated based on the whole document submitted as a graduation project, but rather through a 300-word executive summary that does not allow to gauge and make the best decisions for such an important process; moreover, this type of judgment could lead to subjective analysis. In this regard, juanchoparada (2019) affirms that clear parameters are not in place in the law to prevent the broad level of subjectivity with which CONACES conceptualizes the reasonable equivalence of academic programs and, therefore, to provide validating peers with some legal certainty.

Resolution 06950 of 2015 required only one validation per academic evaluation (a process that serves as a reference and is done initially to programs whose level of studies and equivalence with national programs are uncertain), to be evaluated under this criterion – similar case – in subsequent processes that would reach the Ministry of Education, however, carried out under the same academic program of the same university. While Resolution 20797 of 2017 required three positive validations of the academic evaluation criterion so that it could be assessed on the basis of administrative precedent.

Some students who were studying before the issuance of Resolution 20797 of 2017 were affected. Once they finished their studies and submitted their degree issued abroad for validation under this Resolution, their request was denied even though that university’s specific academic program had already had its degrees validated. In this regard, it is important to highlight that some students claim that the MEN “has violated the principle of legitimate trust and legal certainty,” since they undertook their studies when Resolution 06950 of 2015 was in effect, which is why they should be evaluated using that Resolution. Additionally, they consider that there was no transition period between the Resolutions to allow them to start the process with the Resolution in force at the time their studies began. Even so, opinions in the academic world differ, Galindo (2017) believes that:

Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education has limited itself to examining mere documentation, which often does not account for good training. The university or higher education institution that trained the colleagues entering the country must be recognized by Colombian professors with appropriate academic authority. Even the professional should be evaluated. (p.87)

The aforementioned fails to acknowledge binational educational agreements, entities that act as ministries of education in different countries, quality accreditation systems, teachers and researchers from other countries, who are also evaluated by CONACES, which is made up of professionals specialized in various areas of knowledge. Finally, evaluating theoretical or practical knowledge through different tests or mechanisms applied to a significant number of people would make the validation process more complex and exhausting, and would involve more resources from the Ministry of Education, as well as logistics and extended times to respond by means of a resolution validating or denying the validation of a degree issued abroad.

Universities and Programs Affected by Denied Validations in Colombia

The programs that have been affected the most are those related with the area of education. In this regard, several universities that had previously had their degrees validated in Colombia faced many inconveniences due to the change in regulations. Some examples are Universidad de Baja California, in Mexico, and Universidad Privada Dr. Rafael Beloso Chacin, in Venezuela, in particular, in its doctorate programs in education. This situation is worse for graduates of educational institutions in this neighboring country, since as Mejia (2019) explains “The process demands fulfilling certain requirements and providing documents stipulated by the Ministry of Education in Colombia (...), which may be difficult to access due to the current situation in Venezuela”. Undoubtedly, this is a limitation to practice the profession, obtaining duly apostilled study certificates with the help of brokers or people who charge for this service in Venezuela is expensive, even more so as a result of what Pinto, Baracaldo and Aliaga (2019) claim: “Colombia, being a neighboring country, has been strongly impacted by forced migration of people from Venezuela” (p.3), and consequently, the volume of people trying to legalize documents is high.

One of the hypotheses is that the problem of denied validations would be linked to fiscal rules, since most of the students affected are master's and doctorate degree professors governed by Decree 1278 who depend on their academic degree to improve their ranking and, therefore, their salary. According to De Zubiria (2018) cited in Martinez, Zapata and Castro (2020), who states that “oftentimes, the evaluation system does not help improve the teaching practice, it does not contribute to professional development or to salary improvement” (p.83). Two statutes govern the teaching profession in Colombia, Decree 2277 of 1979 and Decree-Law 1278 of 2002, the latter establishes a series of advantages when undertaking postgraduate studies, specifically master's and doctorate degrees, with which teachers can be promoted after presenting tests designed for this purpose or, otherwise, receive an increase in their salary. However, access to this training in Colombia is difficult for teachers because of the cost in the country; in this regard, Herrera (2020) says:

The scarce offer of master's and doctorate degrees in our country, even more of those that apply to the contexts in which teachers work, apart from the elevated costs considering the money they earn, this is where the government has to contribute with various strategies, so that teachers and directors can access this type of study, granting subsidies and guaranteeing low-cost education at this level for teachers in public universities. (p.9)

That explains why many teachers decide to study mainly in universities in Mexico, Venezuela, Spain, Panama and Argentina, since they have an interesting educational offer based on study plans and lines of research that are related to the tastes of teachers; these places also offer the possibility of remote learning with various virtual learning environments and at affordable prices. In this regard, Lasso (2020) affirms that it is

important to conduct an analysis regarding the costs of studying in the country (one of the main obstacles) which in comparison with countries in the region such as Argentina, Brazil or Chile are much more expensive.

A new world scenario emerged in late 2019. From China, alerts about a new virus began spreading; the coronavirus soon crossed the borders of the Asian country and became a pandemic. Governments had to continue implementing the plans drawn up by its administration, and so did the Ministry of Education of Colombia. So in May 2020, on Teacher's Day, it announced the platform Contacto Maestro, which is part of the training strategies aimed at teachers and directors to access courses, diploma courses, specializations, master's and doctorate degrees (Colombia, 2020). It was necessary and critical, yet efforts have been insufficient, many teachers have opted for more attractive offers abroad because of its limited number of places.

Thus, the number of individuals affected is considerable, since universities with a tradition of recognition of degrees are being denied validations despite the fact that they comply with the requirements of the MEN in Resolution 20797 of 2017. For instance Universidad Baja California, which is officially incorporated in the Ministry of Education of the Government of the State of Nayarit and has a RVOE (Recognition of Official Validity of Studies), its degrees are valid in Mexico and in all countries with which Mexico has signed agreements.

On the other hand, some people have come together in Facebook groups and especially in WhatsApp order to organize activities that lead to a solution to their problem, some initiatives include meetings with program coordinators and university presidents, contacting directors of the teachers' union FECODE (Colombian Federation of Education Workers, who have submitted a list of demands to the Ministry of Education including the homologation and validation of academic degrees, taking into account binational agreements, cases already validated and criteria applied (Fecode, 2021)). Also, students and graduates have contacted ministries of education in the countries of origin of universities. Moreover, they have jointly organized appeals for reconsideration of certain colleagues in the MEN, rights of petition, writs for the protection of fundamental rights (known as *tutelas*) against this agency, mostly seeking to speed up the response to the validation process, among others.

It is worth mentioning the disregard given to binational agreements, as FECODE has pointed out in the latest validation Resolutions issued by the Colombian government. This can be evinced in Resolution 5547 of 2005, in which one of the applicable criteria was degree recognition agreements:

If the degree comes from any of the countries with which the Colombian State has ratified agreements for the validation of degrees, they shall be validated within two (2) months after duly submitting the required documentation. (p.2)

While in validation resolutions issued from 2014 onwards this criterion is non-existent, they have left in a paragraph stating that these

types of agreements are recognized, but not binding, to automatically validate degrees, as is the case with high-quality accreditation in university programs or studies. Additionally, no substantial advantages are offered compared to studies conducted in countries without agreements.

But time goes by, and the situation has not changed much, perhaps with the exception of some universities whose programs' high-quality accreditation were not being recognized, such as the doctorate in education offered by the Universidad Cuauhtemoc in Mexico, which held weekly meetings through the Cisco WebEx platform with the participation of the president, delivered a report on the actions carried out in different entities such as the Secretary of Public Education, Inter-institutional Committees for the Higher Education Evaluation -CIEES-, and representation through lawyers in Colombia for the defense of a student who was initially denied a degree.

In contrast to the situation mentioned above, there are students or graduates of the doctorate in education from Universidad de Baja California who argue that they feel abandoned. At first, when the MEN began to deny the first validations, the university initiated the change of the RVOE with the goal of enhancing quality standards, and to this end it adapted the study plan in accordance with some observations made by the MEN, including the fact that the number of credits in the program was lower than that of doctorates offered in Colombia. In addition to this, it went from a system with quarterly to biannual periods and the number of subjects increased from 10 to 12, Finally, the president visited Colombia and went to the Ministry of Education to express his disagreement. But denials of degrees issued by this university persist despite the changes, the MEN argues other reasons now: low academic load focused on research; lack of international internships, writing indexed articles, attendance and presentations at conferences, seminars; among others.

The students at this university, faced with the silence of its directors, have tried sending letters to institutional emails, making calls to the institution in Mexico, requesting a meeting with the president and looking at possibilities to address the problem, but answers are not satisfactory for them. They lack time or space to engage in dialogue with students, even though this should not be a limitation; students believe that (as a result of the pandemic), communication could be established through Zoom or Meet. In that regard, Fontalvo and Ventura (2021) affirm that the president and his team ought to organize, develop and evaluate the overall functioning of the institution, and that is why they must enable channels of dialogue between different groups that make up the institution. And although it is true that university directors are not guilty of what is happening with Colombian regulation, effective communication is important to explain what they are doing concerning the situation. Currently, the university is in the process of obtaining the quality accreditation in its country, which would help the process of recognition of the doctorate degree in education in Colombia.

Similarly, there are other institutions affected, such as the UNINI (Universidad Internacional Iberoamericana). The following are some (anonymous) reactions of its students:

“I have just received a denied validation of my degree issued by UNINI on a master's degree in strategic management, which was previously validated. That was a blow.” “It is incredible that, from one moment to the next, historically validated degrees are no longer validated; professionals who, with effort, decided to opt for postgraduate courses abroad have to see their chances of promotion and even access to employment compromised, and, therefore, their quality of life and that of their loved ones affected, without the MEN really providing coherent solutions.”

Another sector that has been affected is medicine. Students interested in pursuing medical specializations have had to study in other countries due to the lack of places in national universities. This could follow particular interests, as stated by Cantor (2012) cited in Ochoa (2018), who asserts that “the number of places in medical specializations is defined by doctors or by the medical societies, whose purpose is to maintain high income levels” (p.33), these select few are part of the CONACES rooms, and since all the validation processes pertaining to the medical area are conducted according to the criteria of academic evaluation, it can be concluded that decisions could be motivated by the economic factor instead of by purely technical aspects.

At postgraduate level, from March 25th to July 15th, 2020, 1,188 applications were submitted in the health sector. 779 were positively validated, while 409 were denied, the latter accounted for 34% of students who did not fulfill their goal of having their degrees recognized as equivalent to their counterparts in Colombia. Likewise, considering the information of the requests solved in the field of medicine, and taking into account undergraduate and postgraduate courses in 2016 and 2020, for the first year of a total of 2,234 only 162 were denied (7%), while in 2020 there were 2,526 requests with a total of 772 denials (30%). Figures show that, in percentage terms, approvals have dropped significantly since the repeal of Resolution 06950 of 2015 and the issuance of Resolution 20197 of 2017 to the current Resolution 010687 of October 9th, 2019 (Ministry of National Education cited in Aguirre, 2021).

Repercussions on Students and Graduates' Socio-Emotional Aspect of Programs Denied Validation by the MEN

There are many stories of people whose degree issued abroad has been denied recognition as an equivalent to its Colombian counterpart. Including some who are currently studying at universities abroad, who have learned that several graduates have completed the validation process before the MEN without positive results, even after resorting to appeals for reconsideration in this official agency, many of whom are uncertain whether or not to pursue their studies or temporarily halt them, etc.

At this crossroads, countless people have stood by, regretting the situation they are going through. Feelings of sadness, despair, sorrow, and crying, are involved, and these hinder their socio-emotional skills needed to perform better in their work as teachers, as explained by Gutierrez and

Buitrago (2019), who argue that emotional balance generates a higher level of commitment, motivation, feeling of well-being, which positively impact interactions with other members of the educational community in terms of conflict resolution, being assertive in decision-making.

The fact is that the investment of money and time is considerable, as well as the dedication to study the different subjects of the programs. All of which involves an effort to undertake the activities and a sacrifice to spend money that could have been invested in other projects. However, they are committed with education, thus students who pursue postgraduate studies leave procrastination behind, stop attending social events, and, among others, persist. As stated by Gomez and Alzate (2018), persistence at university is thought of as maintaining a student's commitment despite of the obstacles faced.

Students feel uncertainty and anguish because chances of having their degrees validated decrease as time goes by, and (for many) their job stability is jeopardized, others lose job opportunities, for example, Jose Alejandro Marin, who lost a job opportunity at Universidad Nacional de Colombia due to delays in the validation process (Parga, 2018). Not to mention a fairly substantial number of official teachers, mostly governed by Decree 1278 in order to get better salaries, who have already more than acquired the knowledge and skills to transcend the contexts of their educational community and provide appropriate scenarios in the process of students' teaching and learning.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although it is true that each country must ensure the quality of its education, legal certainty is equally important and necessary; a dialogue framework is required to build educational policies based on the number of people that could be affected throughout the process. As time goes by, it is clear that with Resolution 010687 of 2019 (in force in Colombia) decisions in the validation process are being implemented in compliance with the times set forth by the regulations, but the stance on the programs of the affected universities remain the same.

Undoubtedly, the way in which the academic evaluation criterion is addressed by the CONACES knowledge rooms could improve, it should apply objective parameters and specify minimum aspects of specialization, master's and doctorate studies to avoid people from choosing a specific academic program at a foreign university that does not have quality accreditation in the country of origin. This could lead to a number of requirements to ensure a positive evaluation, i.e., considering the possibility, for example at doctorate level, of demanding a research article derived from the thesis; a national and international lecture; attendance to conferences, seminars, symposiums, meetings; writing books or book chapters, acting as advisor on master's degree theses; and, of course, the preparation of the doctorate thesis, as a points-based scheme that allows a transparent, effective and relevant evaluation of the studies conducted by students. Additionally, the MEN should

produce a list of programs that have been validated with the different criteria: administrative precedent, academic evaluation and high-quality accreditation.

On the other hand, it is necessary to set up agreements similar to those existing in other parts of the world, such as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which made it possible to harmonize the myriad of educational systems in Europe, adjusting teaching and learning methodologies, curriculums, number of credits, accreditation systems, among others, thus enabling mobility for training and employment granted by the recognition of qualifications in several countries. In this regard, Rivera (2016) affirms that in our region we should consider “possibilities for harmonizing national quality assurance schemes and establishing basic criteria for the recognition of academic programs” (p.111).

It is concerning to see so many resolutions in such a short time for this particular case: three different resolutions in less than five years, none of which has had a real transition to guarantee legal stability to those who began their studies under certain particular conditions. In that regard, Camargo (2020) states that “an exception is created for a specific group of individuals who meet a certain condition, who are granted the right with the same requirements as the previous rule” (p.33). On top of this, there has been a lack of socialization of these rules with the community that may be affected (students, foreign universities, etc.), so that, if possible, they adapt their curricula, admission requirements, the research element, among other aspects, to comply with the new requirements by the MEN.

Regarding the socio-emotional aspect, it is important to note that many professionals make a great effort in terms of time and money to settle in another country for several years (apart from their loved ones) to then return with the expectation that this sacrifice will be rewarded in terms of quality of life. Their studies should lead to appreciation, and it could be tapped into by the companies or entities where they work and thus be conducive to better remuneration. In the words of Gil, Casas and Lemus (2020), “the workers’ abilities are reflected in their income as they accumulate more experience and, to a greater extent, if undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are added” (p.262). This is reaffirmed by Perez (2020), cited in Sangoluisa (2021), where he highlights that “education is a path to a better way of living” (p.87), it should lead to improved working conditions, better positions, promotions and, incidentally, placing themselves one step higher in the social structure.

Subsequent studies are recommended to analyze some variables that can be of great contribution to the problem of validation in Colombia, such as the percentage of positively validated studies corresponding to virtual postgraduate programs, especially those concerning doctorate training programs, considering that for the Snies (2021) there is no offer of doctorates in the distance learning modality (virtual) in Colombia. This fact is reflected in what was expressed by Facundo (2003), cited in Ahumada, Gamboa and Guerrero (2018), when he affirmed that “higher education in the distance modality in Colombia has not been

embraced as it should, mainly because of prejudice and resistance on the part of many university professors, particularly from universities with the greatest academic development and prestige, as well as from some sectors of citizenship” (p.25), so it shouldn't be surprising that many of the academic peers of CONACES are skeptical about this modality of study.

To conclude, Colombia is a country where master's degree and (especially) doctorate graduates are needed. The meeting of Sabios (2019) revealed that 95% of doctorate graduates in the country work in higher education institutions, and they recommended attracting Colombian nationals working abroad. However, there are many drawbacks that affect this recommendation, including the possibility of not having their degrees validated thus being subject to lower remuneration in Colombia. On the other hand, it brings education policies in primary, secondary and secondary education to the spotlight, due to multiple factors, teachers who work at these levels cannot access postgraduate studies, and when they do, their efforts are hindered. Time will give them an answer.

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