



Social responsibility as a strategy in university management

Responsabilidad social como estrategia en la gestión universitaria

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ABSTRACT

We are at a juncture where social responsibility is perceived as a new way of doing citizenship and working for development, which generates interest in various groups of civil society, including universities, to strengthen its relevance in society. The objective of this paper is to analyze social responsibility as a strategy in university management. It is a descriptive documentary study, based on a systematic review of articles and texts selected with clearly defined criteria. The results indicate that social responsibility forces to restructure and rethink the university tasks in the 21st century, so that it can be at the forefront of the processes of transformation and change with scientific, technological, social and cultural orientation. It is concluded that under the strategy of university social responsibility it is possible to perceive the social, economic, political and welfare needs that are poorly met and require solutions, managing to articulate teaching, research and extension, with a view to strengthening the university-environment linkage.

RESUMEN

Estamos en una coyuntura donde la responsabilidad social es percibida como una nueva manera de hacer ciudadanía y trabajar para el desarrollo, por lo que genera interés en diversos grupos de la sociedad civil, entre ellos las universidades, para afianzar su relevancia en la sociedad. El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar la responsabilidad social como una estrategia en la gestión de las universidades. Es un estudio descriptivo documental, basado en una revisión sistemática de artículo y textos seleccionados con criterios claramente definidos. Los resultados señalan que la responsabilidad social obliga a reestructurar y repensar los quehaceres universitarios en el siglo XXI, para que ella pueda ser vanguardia de los procesos de transformación y de cambios con orientación científica, tecnológica, social y cultural. Se concluye que bajo la estrategia de responsabilidad social universitaria logran percibirse las necesidades sociales, económicas, políticas y asistenciales que son poco satisfechas y que requieren soluciones, logrando articular la docencia, investigación y extensión, con miras a fortalecer la vinculación universidad-entorno.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Social responsibility; universities; university management

Responsabilidad social; universidades; gestión universitaria

Introduction

Today we do not only talk about corporate social responsibility, but the term has acquired relevance for various sectors of society such as: foundations, corporations, public agencies, universities, guilds, and other institutions that have the duty to identify and provide solutions to problems of public interest, through strategies and citizen initiatives that are inspired by transparency, plurality, sustainability, as well as civic ethics. In other words, social responsibility (SR) goes beyond the limit of the company with its environment. In this sense, Pinillos (2005) considers that corporate social responsibility is a concept to be defined and offers some clarifications about it, among which he highlights the fact that the corporation to which this responsibility refers is not only limited to the large multinational company, but to

the institutions (in its broad sense) that directly or indirectly have the capacity to generate socioeconomic impact in the community where they are developing their activity.

Thus, it is important to establish a concept of Social Responsibility (SR) that is adapted to the State and public management in different social areas, such as university education, through programs aimed at improving the quality of life of the people. This implies a paradigmatic challenge for the management of universities, in the sense that social responsibility is not an exclusive patrimony of entrepreneurship, but poses a new relationship between University-State-Society as a real factor of transformation. All this is framed in the growing consensus that the development of a democratic society will not be possible without the participation and cooperation of three basic actors: the state, the market and society.

The objective of this paper is to analyze social responsibility as a strategy in university management. It is a descriptive documentary study, based on a systematic review of articles and texts selected with clearly defined criteria.

Traditionally, it has been considered that the company as a production unit fulfills the economic function of producing goods and services to satisfy human needs. The traditional consideration of this function understands that the company, in the development of its economic-productive activity, implicitly fulfills a social function centered on its contribution to the general objectives of economic policy, as goals expressive of the degree of economic and social welfare desirable by the community (Díez de Castro, 1982:38-39).

In this context, it is considered that the most important responsibility of the company to society is to effectively fulfill its economic mission of providing the products and services it requires, in addition to others such as protecting the environment for future generations, the discussion that presents corporate social responsibility as an element of particular importance for the permanence and success of public or private business organizations arises. In this regard, seeking to be an excellent company is not incompatible with being a responsible company, where the business plan is included with the life project.

The responsibility of the company towards society as a whole, or social responsibility understood as an integral responsibility, that is, economic and social, according to which the company, in the exercise of its function, must be aware of the real and total effects of its actions

on the environment, adopting a positive attitude towards the consideration of the values and expectations of the same.

According to Guedez (2006:75), CSR is defined as "the capacity to be accountable for what one does or does not do, as well as the corresponding consequences of what was or was not done. It is equivalent to being accountable to others or being accountable for oneself; it means being accountable for everything, to everyone, all the time and everywhere". Thus, the implementation of CSR requires a social balance sheet with three stages: political, technical and the integration of social objectives. The social balance sheet is a reference point for determining the extent to which institutions have achieved this responsibility (Reyes, 2006: 134).

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According to Belmartino and Bloch (2002), CSR includes the adoption of criteria in business management, such as the formalization of policies and management systems in the economic, social and environmental spheres; transparency of information on the results achieved in these areas; and, finally, external scrutiny of these results. CSR thus merits including strategies that promote sustainable production, investment and socially responsible consumption, among others. In this context, CSR includes the adoption of social criteria in business management, and implies the formalization of policies and management indicators in the economic, social, health and environmental spheres, which makes information transparency, co-responsibility, knowledge building and its application complex.

Materials and Methods

Organizations also exercise their social responsibility when they meet the expectations of different stakeholders (employees, partners, customers, local communities, the environment, shareholders, suppliers) regarding their behavior, contributing to socially and environmentally sustainable and economically viable development. Within this framework of ideas, social responsibility is understood as the practice of an organization with respect to third parties. In other words, it refers to the way in which the company or organization relates to and impacts society through its practices, and the influence that society and the expectations of social actors have on it.

Therefore, companies need to go beyond simple compliance with the law or legal provisions and must create initiatives to improve all the

actors involved. In this sense, it is understood that a company whose fundamental values are ethical responsibility, equity and trust, but which is also surrounded by a framework of commitment, will be able to transform strengths into competitive advantages over organizations that only have instrumental organizational values.

In this context, if the human component is the determining factor that moves organizations and knowing the trends that are happening, "alliances and agreements between stakeholders are required to achieve continuity over time and therefore, business success, but always under the reference of responsibility and credibility required to be classified as an organization of the future (Pelekais and Aguirre, 2008).

Results

Social responsibility concerns all organizations, insofar as they have an impact on society and the environment, and must contribute to sustainable social and environmental development. Therefore, it should not be a strictly business matter, since its ultimate purpose is a common good in which all social actors participate from their respective objectives and institutional tasks. The mission of universities is to generate and disseminate knowledge in order to fulfill the social function entrusted to them of training professionals.

The training of future managers and professionals in the business world in the values of business ethics and social responsibility is essential for their future behavior as managers and the stage of their training is the ideal time to instill these values and principles in people who are called to acquire responsibilities in the professional and business world. In view of this, it is required that they comply with their social responsibility and initiate a process of institutional change to be in tune with the changes that have originated this new era.

Thus, by conceiving the university as an organization responsible for the creation and dissemination of knowledge, as its main product, it is disturbing in the sense of

(Martinez et al., 2008).

This means that the social responsibility of the university concerns both the administrative routines (purchasing, governance, planning,

service delivery, enrollment, marketing, personnel selection, etc.) and the academic dimensions of training and research (Vallaey and Alvarez, 2019).

Therefore, without discarding the contributions of CSR, under the pretext that universities are not companies, "without erasing all that has meant during the last decades the efforts of management sciences to build tools for monitoring organizational activities and impacts in favor of human and sustainable development, we need a definition of USR that is really useful and adapted to academic work" (Vallaey and Alvarez, 2019: 99).

Universities could not stay away from the reflection on Social Responsibility, not only because they are organizations, but also because they are responsible for training future professionals who will work in companies, future citizens who will have to democratically promote human rights, and future officials who will be responsible for the common good of our world (Martinez et al, 2008).

The realization of the social responsibility of universities in the 21st century will depend, on the one hand, on how their mission is defined and, on the other hand, on the problems faced by the society in which they operate.

The university trains the vast majority of professionals that make up companies, public administration and international organizations, the training they acquire at a conceptual and methodological level will be the one they will later develop in their working life, which is why we can speak of "University Social Responsibility".

University Social Responsibility (USR) is a new university management policy that redefines the traditional outreach and social solidarity, introducing a global approach to care for the administrative and academic impact on all university processes.

It is "the responsibility of the university for the social and environmental impacts it generates, through an ethical and efficient management of its administrative processes and substantive academic functions, in order to participate together with the other actors of its territory of influence in the promotion of a fair and sustainable human development". (Vallaey and Alvarez, 2019: 112). The administrative staff, in this sense, can be a new important protagonist of the social and environmental commitment of Latin American universities, from the exercise of administrative routines (purchases, agile procedures,

healthy human relations, decision making, budget, transparency, fight against corruption, selection of suppliers, healthy campus, etc.).

This consolidates the new issues introduced by the RSU that were absolutely unknown from the model of extension and social projection, i.e. all the internal problems of good governance, environment, work environment, gender equity in management positions, among others.

On the other hand, university social responsibility is understood as the university's capacity to disseminate and put into practice a set of general and specific principles and values, through four key processes: management, teaching, research and extension. In this way it assumes its social responsibility before the university community itself and the country where it is inserted (Jiménez cited by Vallaey and Álvarez, 2019: 112).

Conclusions

Social responsibility in university management leads to the development of a rigorous management approach, with measurement and efficiency in strategies and processes, in order to avoid that there is no real benefit to the university or to society.

The application of social responsibility in the university implies paying attention to the dimension of administrative management, no longer focusing on the three substantive functions of the university, but rather on the four processes: management, education, research and extension.

Therefore, the responsibility that the university must assume does not originate in the fulfillment of a specific function (that of its "outreach" to society), but in the exercise of all its daily activities, including outreach activities. In this context, involving administrative personnel, teachers and the student community more in the academic work of the university, and no longer seeing them as support resources, under the strategy of university social responsibility, makes it possible to perceive the social, economic, political and welfare needs that are poorly met and require solutions, managing to articulate teaching, research and outreach, with a view to strengthening the university-environment linkage.

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