Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability: Emerging Trends in Developing Economies

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THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN HISPANIC AMERICA: A RESPONSIBLE TREND IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Lina Gomez

ABSTRACT

Purpose – To review and understand the importance of a well-known movement among universities in Hispanic America called “university social responsibility” (USR). USR places responsible and sustainable practices in the bottom line of everyday university management processes (e.g., campus operations, teaching, research, and community outreach).

Methodology/approach – Through a selection of relevant literature in USR, the concept, origins, importance, and implementation of USR practices are discussed in three sections (corporate social responsibility, the importance of USR, and planning, developing, and evaluating USR).

Findings – Results indicate the relevance of the practice of USR in Hispanic America because it points out specific impacts and core areas
that other definitions (e.g., CSR) have not considered. Practical cases from different Hispanic universities are shown as examples of the practice of USR.

Research limitations — This chapter does not present a complete list of all authors that have studied USR. However, it fulfills to introduce, review, and grasp the practice of USR.

Practical implications — It serves as a guide to all members of the university community (e.g., administrators, professors, students, researchers, and local communities) to understand the role of universities in achieving sustainable development.

Originality/value of chapter — USR is an emergent approach that promotes responsible everyday management. This chapter is a starting point for new reflections, theories, and discussions regarding USR around the world. It also engages in further studies regarding USR in other developing regions like Africa, Asia, or Eastern Europe.

Keywords: University social responsibility; Hispanic America; globalization; developing countries

Social responsibility is a broad concept that applies to any type of organization. It is a well-known business philosophy that by definition is not limit to corporations. The term social responsibility makes reference to legal and ethical commitments that are derived from the impacts of organizational operations in the society, economy, and environment. Universities are also responsible for the impacts of their activities to different groups of stakeholders (e.g., students, staff, professors, alumni, and local communities). Universities, as centers of knowledge, must serve as a model of ethical behavior, ensuring fair operating systems, transparency, and respect for human rights.

Higher educational institutions have a unique role in securing a sustainable tomorrow because they are the ones in charge of promoting responsible knowledge and practice. Universities are accountable for helping students to acquire skills and competencies for grasping the importance of social responsibility and sustainable practices (Matten & Moon, 2004). Today, students are more proactive, thanks to social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest), that empower them to have
opinions and organize movements for improving the quality of life. These manifestations can range from university management, political—cultural ideologies to sustainable operations.

Therefore, universities are in charge of educating responsible leaders, but future leaders are the ones in charge of creating human conditions in order to ensure a sustainable development of communities. However, can universities guarantee that all actors (not only some groups of students) are involved and committed with social responsibility thinking and practice? Sadly, social responsibility practices in universities around the world are voluntary-based and they are still unexplored (Gomez & Vargas Preciado, 2013; Nejati, Shafaei, Salamzadeh, & Daraei, 2011). University world rankings are focused on the number of faculty publications, number of students, but not in the applicability of academic research and how it can help societies (Nejati et al., 2011). In Hispanic America or Spanish America (region that includes American Spanish-speaking countries and Spain), the growing importance of social responsibility practices in universities have appeared during the last decades. In Hispanic America, the social responsibility of universities is conceived as an ethical and integral administration model that promotes a mutual benefit for both universities and societies.

In 2001, several universities in Hispanic America, in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), developed the initiative Ética, Capital Social y Desarrollo (Ethics, Social Capital, and Development) that helped to raise awareness in the importance of social responsible practices that go beyond volunteering and traditional community outreach programs (Vallaeys, 2007). Thanks to this effort, the concept of Responsabilidad Social Universitaria (RSU) that means in English “university social responsibility” (USR) was born, and since then it has grown in importance and recognition among higher educational institutions in Hispanic America.

The first definition of USR was build, thanks to a network of Chilean universities through the project Universidad Construye País (University build countries) developed between 2001 and 2005. They defined USR as the ability to develop and promote a group of principles and values through the development of four processes: management, teaching, research, and community outreach (Hernández & Saldarriaga, 2009). According to Vallaeys, De La Cruz, and Sasia (2009), the practice of USR is different from corporate social responsibility (CSR), because it encloses specific and unique impacts that concern universities. These impacts are classified as organizational (related to work climate and environment), educational (academic foundation), cognitive (epistemological research), and social (community outreach). In addition, universities should plan, develop,
communicate, and evaluate USR practices following four core working concepts: responsible campus, social knowledge management, professional education, and social participation (Vallaey et al., 2009).

Many of the USR definitions come from members of the academic world in Hispanic America. USR can be defined as a management theory that requires universities to think in a social responsible way from its basic functions such as teaching and researching. The social responsibility of universities is not only to educate responsible professionals and citizens, but it is also to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development, and to promote social justice (De la Cruz Ayuso & Sasia Santos, 2008). In this sense, the practice of USR promotes a true interdisciplinary work between professors, researchers, deans, students, and external stakeholders (e.g., local communities) based on ethical learning, teaching, training, and management (Bacigalupo, 2008).

The purpose of this chapter is to review the concept of USR in Hispanic America, its implementation, and the importance it has for creating long-term sustainability thinking and practice among Hispanic American university. This chapter continues with a review on CSR and USR. Subsequently, the different steps employed to implement USR are exposed, followed by practice cases in USR in Hispanic America. The last section outlines the main conclusions and future directions on the area.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

The concept of CSR has gained more prominence today than ever before. Many factors have produced this interest: bad behavior toward clients and employees, lack of responsibility regarding environmental impacts, and many other negative consequences due to inadequate organization management (Crowther & Aras, 2008).

CSR is essentially a continuous commitment to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of people and planet. It is a different approach of doing business where companies respond to stakeholders regarding operations that impact (positively or negatively) all aspects of the economy, society, and environment. Stakeholders are “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 16). The World Business Council for Sustainable Development developed a more proactive/multistakeholder definition of CSR. CSR reflects a continuous
multistakeholder commitment, because not only takes into account the quality of life of the workforce (employees) but also their families as well as local communities and society at large, while contributing to economic development (Moir, 2001). In addition, CSR describes the relationship between companies and society (Porter & Kramer, 2006), and the interrelationship among economic, social, and environmental aspects (Ihlen, 2008).

Although CSR has grown in importance and acceptance, there are still no agreements about what CSR really encloses and represents (Crowther & Aras, 2008; Dahlsrud, 2008; Garriga & Melé, 2004). CSR could mean different things to different people or even also in different times (Pedersen, 2006). Van Marrewijk (2003) established that companies are socially responsible for different reasons, (1) because they feel obligated, (2) because of its corporate nature, (3) because they really want to do it (due to hidden benefits or because companies feel that is morally correct). Moreover, companies decide to perform CSR strategies in order to (1) defend reputation, (2) justify benefits over costs, (3) integrate CSR into the business strategy, and (4) to learn, innovate, and manage risks (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; citing Zadek, 2000). Key attributes of CSR can include good governance, managing social and environmental impacts, dialogue, and communication with key stakeholders, and partnerships with other organizations for reaching sustainable development (Vallaeys et al., 2009).

The practice of CSR proposes that companies must recognize key groups of stakeholders and include their demands to the corporation’s strategic plan (Hartman, Subin, & Dhanda, 2007). In addition, companies should communicate CSR efforts to stakeholders in order to nurture their corporate image and ameliorate reputation (Schneider, Stieglitz, & Lattemann, 2008). Communicating CSR also improves relationships with stakeholders and attracts better skilled employees (Castelo Branco & Rodrigues Lima, 2006). Therefore, it is important the presence of creative communication (striking, relevant, and understandable content) at the moment of employing CSR communication (Dawkins, 2004). Today, companies employ online platforms such as corporate web sites or social media to communicate and report regarding CSR. There are several guidelines or standards that have served as a framework for CSR and sustainability reporting (e.g., Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), AccountaAbility, UN Global Compact, ISO 14100, SA 8000, and ISO 26000). There are also well-known and generally accepted indexes such as Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), FTSE4Good Index, or Ethibel Sustainability Index (ESI) that measure sustainability and CSR practices. CSR annual reports are also an excellent resource to show how a company is engaged in
CSR. However, the way CSR annual reports are communicated and disclosed to the public demonstrates little desire to initiate real dialogues with stakeholders, failing to promote interactivity (Lundquist, 2010).

The concept of social responsibility has developed considerably in the corporate world, bringing tremendous benefits for companies as reported by Singh (2011). According to McKinsey Holland, “Companies that paid attention to CSR in the last three years reported an increase in their share price of 43% against a 12% increase for those who didn’t” (Singh, 2011). This means that good corporate behavior can bring economic value. In addition, empirical research has encountered links between CSR, return on equity, business image, and performance due to aligning CSR with the bottom line of companies (Zairi, 2000 as cited by Cornelius, Wallace, & Tassabehji, 2007).

In Hispanic America, there has been a growing increase of companies that have adopted CSR as a model of internal management. However, one of the main difficulties to implement CSR resides in not having good labor practices (Dirección Académica de Responsabilidad Social, 2009). CSR is mainly influenced in Hispanic America by NGOs and multilateral institutions, which are the ones in charge of implementing CSR initiatives in the private sector (Santamaría Zapata, 2010).

The practice of CSR and its implications cannot be applied to higher educational institutions. USR distances from CSR because it takes into account specific impacts that companies do not know, and specific features that well-known guidelines (e.g., GRI) do not consider (Vallaeyss et al., 2009). For instance, educational and cognitive impacts help in the solution of pedagogical and epistemological problems that only concerns universities, not companies (Vallaeyss et al., 2009). Therefore, corporations and universities have a different approach to social responsibility and what really encloses for both of them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF USR

According to Carroll (1999), social responsibility of businesses encloses economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, meaning that corporations should go beyond their purely economic and legal functions. In that sense, higher educational institutions should also go beyond their primarily functions (student education, develop research, and community outreach) and aligned these functions with the practice of USR. In spite
that many universities state that they are social responsible by nature, the reality is that any institution could generate negative social impacts (without knowing it) even if their social mission/purpose is positive (Vallaeys, 2008).

The practice of social responsibility is fundamental in everyday management of higher educational institutions. Due to social and cultural changes in the beginning of the twenty-first century, universities have had to rethink their position and their function in the society (González Alcántara, Fontaneda González, Camino López, & Antón Lara, 2010). Some studies have confirmed the importance of responsible and sustainable practices in different university scenarios.

Wright (2010) analyzed how presidents and vice presidents in Canadian universities perceived the importance of sustainable university practices. Results indicated that they were not very familiar with the concept of sustainable university. Findings also encountered that two of the challenges in the path of a sustainable university were financial predicaments and lack of understanding and awareness among university population (students, professors, staff, alumni, etc.). These kinds of obstacles faced by universities regarding sustainability were also agreed by Pollock, Horn, Costanza, and Sayre (2009). These authors pointed out that ineffective governance, traditional disciplinary boundaries, and the lack of a shared sustainable vision obstruct university progress in sustainability and social responsibility areas.

Typically top universities around the world are aware of their environmental impacts and have taken measurements in reducing these impacts (Nejati, Salamzadeh, & Sharafi, 2010). In this study Nejati et al. (2010) found that world top universities (Harvard University, University of Cambridge, Yale University, University College London, Imperial College London, University of Oxford, University of Chicago, Princeton University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and California Institute of Technology) practiced “reduction of greenhouse gas emissions,” “reduction in the use of fossil fuels and increase in the use of renewable resources,” “running a specialized environmental center/network,” and “increase of environmental awareness among staff and students” (p. 443). Another study found the presence of different CSR core areas (organizational governance, human rights, labor practices, the environment, fair operating practices, consumer issues, and community involvement and development) in the web sites of top 10 world universities (Nejati et al., 2011). Results showed that all of the analyzed universities have covered all core areas of CSR except community involvement and development.
USR initiatives in developed countries (like the ones mentioned earlier) have a commitment with communities regarding civic terms. On the other hand, USR initiatives in Hispanic American universities relate to social inequalities that characterize the reality of developing regions (Universidad Construye País, 2004). In this sense, the differences between developed and developing countries are substantial, because social problems and conceptions are radically different. Therefore, there are differences in establishing how the practice of social responsibility in universities should be developed. Particularly in Hispanic America, social responsibility must be placed in the core management (mission, vision, values) of universities, promoting a significant change that positively affects all university members and its relationships with others.

However, the birth of the USR did not suppose the beginning of socially responsible activities within the academic setting (as same as happened with CSR/Philanthropy in the corporate setting); some universities already had related initiatives, especially concerned with the environment (Domínguez Pachón, 2009).

Higher educational institutions are a key influencer for new generations regarding social responsibility and sustainable development. Through community outreach, universities commonly express their commitment with local communities. However, community outreach initiatives are usually separated and isolated from the bottom line of universities (Dirección Académica de Responsabilidad Social, 2009). In Hispanic America, universities use the term Extensión Universitaria to refer to community outreach programs. Community outreach in Hispanic America has to deal particularly with how universities interact with local communities with the purpose of contributing in the progress of the regions (Domínguez Pachón, 2009). Usually community outreach initiatives are managed in a one-way interaction (from university to a particular receiver) and not as a two-way communication process, in a reciprocal way, where both emitters and receivers agree in a mutual understanding (Dirección Académica de Responsabilidad Social, 2009). In other words, universities bond with society using a unidirectional approach, without taking into account feedback from external actors. The community outreach model also lacks of sustainability, due to it does not demonstrate how universities efficiently manage institutional resources (Dirección Académica de Responsabilidad Social, 2009).

With globalization and rapid technological changes in our society, there are many challenges and demands that universities face. The practice of USR represents a renovated approach of the social commitment (community outreach) of universities, aligning USR with everyday management of...
institutional processes (Bacigalupo, 2008). USR focuses in a mutual beneficial relationship between universities members and external stakeholders. University members (e.g., professors and student) participate in a sustainable learning process that takes into account the involvement of external stakeholders. In other words, curriculum and research are improved, thanks to external stakeholders’ feedback.

The concept of USR was born in Chile in 2001 through joint efforts of 13 universities with the initiative Construye País (Build Country) (Vallaeys, 2007). This project was born with the purpose of expanding the concept and the practice of USR among Chilean universities. Students, professors, staff, community members, and other external actors have performed research, reflected, discussed, and detected challenges that Chilean universities have faced in social responsibility terms, establishing principles and values that inspire universities to adopt USR (Universidad Construye País, 2004). Furthermore, in the same year, the IDB created the initiative Ética, Capital Social y Desarrollo (Ethics, Social Capital, and Development). After that, many universities in Hispanic America understood the importance of USR and started working in networks with other universities to create partnerships (Vallaeys, 2007). In addition, many successful efforts have appeared in the last years: a universities’ USR network (more than 100), virtual dialogues of USR among universities, a virtual course for professors (by the Organization of American States), a competition for getting advising in the creation of USR initiatives (13 universities advised in four countries in 2006), a multimedia CD of USR (2006), an observatory of USR among several universities in Colombia (in 2007), an observatory of USR among online institutions, and a guide on how to implement USR (published by the IDB in 2008). This manual written by Vallaeys et al. (2009) has become “the bible” for implementing the practice of USR in Hispanic America.

One of the most accepted definitions of USR was developed by Vallaeys et al. (2009). They defined USR as the ability to disseminate and employ a set of principles and values through four processes: responsible campus, social knowledge, professional education, and social participation. In other words, USR encloses to what universities are responsible for, to whom they are responsible, and how they are responsible (González Alcántara et al., 2010). First, universities are responsible of placing ethics in the center of the academic and organizational life. This means that all the decisions regarding management, teaching, research, and community outreach should be in an ethical way. Second, universities are responsible with different members of the university community (staff, professors, students,
and alumni), and external stakeholders such as local communities, governments, and other key external groups. Third, universities are responsible in the development of everyday operations in areas such as management, teaching, research, and community. Moreover, universities should be capable of manage human, democratic, social, and ecological values.

The practice of USR has gained foothold among Hispanic universities. However, USR has not been defined, promoted, and employed by universities in developed countries such as United States and Europe. Particularly in the United States, there is a tendency in including sustainability in both the curriculum and university initiatives; 90 out of 100 top universities had a sustainability office working in core areas such as land, water, buildings, waste, energy, transportation, dining services, purchasing, and recycling (Gomez & Vargas Preciado, 2013). Universities in the United States have used the concept of sustainability because it has worked well for them. Nevertheless, the USR concept could help to detect and understand other impacts that are important for ensuring the well-being of universities and its internal and external stakeholders. These impacts are related to the management of social knowledge (cognitive and epistemological impacts) and educational formation.

University’s Impacts

Any type of organization can cause specific impacts due to everyday operations and management. Sometimes organizations produce negative impacts without realizing it. Previous research has shown that universities can generate significant environmental impacts (Jabbour, 2010 as cited by Nejati et al., 2011). Universities have impacts on the economy, society, and environment due to a high number of people and vehicles around campus, high consumption of materials, and development of complex activities, among other causes. Therefore, organizational impacts should be taken into account and they should be managed in an ethical and transparent way. Specifically, what are the different impacts that universities cause? According to Vallaeys et al. (2009), there are four important impacts that universities should be aware of: organizational, educational, cognitive, and social, as shown in Fig. 1.

In the figure, the vertical axis (organizational and social impacts) are common impacts to any type of organization (NGOs, companies, government offices, etc.), because each one of these types of organization employ people, have an ecological footprint, and are connected with local
communities (Vallaeys et al., 2009). Meanwhile, the horizontal axis is related only to academic settings, because universities are the only ones in charge of the professional education of new generations, and in the definition and evolution of science. This means that the practice of CSR cannot be applied to universities or USR applied to companies, because every type of organization has its own impacts.

Vallaeys et al. (2009) states four university impacts:

1. Organizational impacts: As with any organization, universities have also impacts on the life of internal publics (staff, professors, and students), and specific impacts on the environment regarding how campus operations are performed (waste, deforestation, transportation, contamination, etc.). In other words, universities should ask themselves how they are fulfilling everyday operations around campus. These habits could be intentional or unintentional, and could affect everyday life of people working/studying in universities, its families, and local communities.

2. Educational impacts: It relates to the teaching-learning processes and how curriculums are developed and constructed. In other words, what
kind of professionals are universities educating and how universities can restructure teaching and training in order to educate responsible citizens. Universities have a direct impact on student education, shaping how students understand, interpret, and behave in the society.

(3) Cognitive impacts: It encloses all related to epistemological and ethical orientations, theoretical approaches, research lines, and production and diffusion of knowledge. In other words, how universities generate and manage knowledge and the types of knowledge they should produce. Universities make an impact on what is known regarding truth, science, legitimacy, and teaching.

(4) Social impacts: It relates to university participation in the development of local communities and social capital. Universities have a clear impact on the economic, social, and political development of society. Higher educational institutions promote accessible knowledge, create social capital, and connect education with external realities.

These are some examples of possible risks due to negative impacts caused by universities:

- Negative organizational impacts: unhealthy work climate, unethical institutional inconsistencies, bullying, lack of democracy and transparency, lack of communication and leadership, bad environmental habits.
- Negative educational impacts: lack of ethical and citizenship education, reduction of course load, lack of a curriculum that does not include project-based learning, service-based learning, divergent thinking, and creativity.
- Negative cognitive impacts: disconnection between society and academia, scientific irresponsibility, knowledge fragmentation, lack of transdisciplinarity.
- Negative social impacts: indifference to social problems, uninterested in communicating social responsibility initiatives.

On the contrary, a responsible management of universities can lead to several positive impacts such as:

- Positive organizational impacts: an ethical and transparent management system, excellent work climate, excellent environmental policies and programs, excellent communication processes, and the promotion of internal democratic processes. In addition, it promotes better relationships with critical groups of stakeholders such as students associations and unions. Universities should take into account stakeholders into the planning
and evaluation processes to achieve and improve positive organizational impacts.

- Positive educational impacts: responsible professional and citizenship training, socially responsible knowledge, project-based learning curriculum, service-based curriculum, divergent thinking and creativity in the curriculum, and course load that is agreed by all members implicated with it.
- Positive cognitive impacts: promotion of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity strategies, research relevant to social problems, social responsibility of science, citizenship participation, and the incorporation of students to research projects related to USR.
- Positive social impacts: participation in the solution of social problems, communication of social responsible practices, involvement in local community programs. In addition, integration of social networks, solid partnerships with NGOs.

**PLANNING, DEVELOPING, AND EVALUATING USR**

After detecting organizational, educational, cognitive, and social impacts, universities should, define four articulated policies of social responsible management (Vallaeyets et al., 2009). However, each university should elaborate these policies according to its own mission, values, and institutional vision. These four core areas of USR are always interconnected for the creation of continuous improvement and strengthening of responsible practices and processes.

**Responsible Campus**

Responsible campus refers to the promotion of ethical, democratic, and environmental behavior that is coherent with university values (Vallaeyets et al., 2009). It involves work climate, student life, management of human resources, fair establishment of an internal democratic participation process, and management of environmental impacts (positive and negative). In other words, it implies how universities manage, in a socially responsible way, everyday institutional processes and values (e.g., democracy, transparency, good governance, respect of labor rights, sustainable environment) Regarding the environment, universities should implement recycling
systems, and the use of alternative energies and clean technologies. The purpose of a responsible campus policy is to promote responsible behavior to all members of the university community: staff, professors, and students. In this way, members of the community learn, embrace, and share ethical norms.

**Professional Education**

It relates to the integral and responsible academic formation of future professionals (Vallaeys et al., 2009). In other words is the social responsible management of academic formation/training of students. This implies that the curricula should have a close relation with real social problems (economic, social, and environmental) and should be in contact with external publics involved in those social problems (Carrizo, 2004). The development of students’ potential requires an open-door policy that allows them to benefit from a responsible and sustainable curriculum, so they can fully extent all their capabilities.

However, today universities are not including social responsibility courses in the curricula, especially in the United States and Europe. More than a half of the top 100 business schools in the United States are not including CSR-related core courses (related to environment, society, fair operating practices, human rights, etc.) into the graduate curriculum (Gomez & Vargas Preciado, 2013). In addition, Matten and Moon (2004) have found that many professors and practitioners believe that social responsibility should be fully integrated into the curriculum for helping students to make social and environmental decisions as businesspersons (Matten & Moon, 2004). But sadly universities are preparing students with a profitable vision rather than encouraging a sustainability vision among students.

**Social Knowledge Management**

It is the social responsible management of production and diffusion of knowledge, research, and epistemological models (Vallaeys et al., 2009). On one hand, universities are call to take a relevant posture regarding academic research. On the other hand, universities are required to establish relations and connections with external agents. In other words, social knowledge management refers to the access to pertinent knowledge
(selection and production of useful and responsible knowledge that is dissemi-
nated and communicated to the community, with participative methods
and build in a democratic way). In addition, departments and schools
should partner with local administrations for developing an interdisciplin-
ary collaboration. In that way, researchers and professors from different
specialties can work together in a particular social predicament, creating
knowledge synergies.

Social Participation

It refers to the creation of knowledge and participative processes with local
communities in the solution of problems in order to reaching sustainable
development (Vallaey, 2009). The purpose is to bring closer universi-
ties and local communities in order to improve communications and create
mechanisms of participation. In other words is the social responsible man-
agement of the university in the community. The participation of universi-
ties in local communities does not limit to capacitiation of disadvantaged
publics, instead it promotes the constitution of mutual learning commu-
nities. For instance, members of the university community and nonmem-
bers can work in teams in a social project that is agreed by everyone
(students, professors, and communities), assuring a permanent learning
process for contributing to the solution of particular problems. Both uni-
versities and society should work together and have expectations and
responsibilities for a beneficial exchange (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno,
2008). Universities are usually engage with traditional stakeholders (stu-
dents, professors, staff, alumni, funding organizations), and social impacts
have prevent that universities engage with other types of wider commu-
nities or even working with industries (Jongbloed et al., 2008).

After understanding the above core areas, universities should take into
account four key steps that help them to fully commit in a well-managed
university social responsible practice. These four steps were developed and
suggested by Vallaey, et al. (2009).

Commitment

This first step refers to the engagement and empowerment of different
members of the university community in the USR practice. The practice of
USR cannot happen in isolation (by a specific group of people, e.g., USR
team, staff, or department), the practice of USR must be articulated with
the institutional mission. However, it is needed the creation of a team in
charge of planning, developing, promoting, and evaluating social responsible practices, but all members of the university community should be committed (not only internal publics but also externals like alumni, government officials, governments agencies, neighborhood residents, local communities, etc.). The USR team must be the driving force behind all planning, implementation, and evaluation of USR practices. The team should be committed to work together to drive a sustainable and responsible change in all university members (Seminur Topal, 2009).

USR is an institutional policy that manages internal and external impacts. Therefore, the practice of USR has to promote participative dialogues with diverse groups of stakeholders (internal and external) that could be affected due to these impacts. Universities must identify key stakeholders, classified them according to relative importance, and then establish relationships with them (Jongbloed et al., 2008). Universities encompass a great number of stakeholders; internally it can include students, professors, staff, administration, and top management. Externally they can include alumni, research communities, local or external communities, businesses, social movements, consumer organizations, governments, and professional associations. That is why it is very important to have a real commitment with different groups of stakeholders. Real commitment means in engaging in ways to dialogue with various groups of stakeholders, and not only maintaining contact with them (Jongbloed et al., 2008). In sum, the challenge in this step is to guide and commit university members in the importance of social responsibility through communication, reporting, and the promotion of partnerships.

The USR team has specific tasks to fulfill and it could include:

- Create and develop a self-diagnosis of USR practices.
- Support in the selection of improvement areas and the implementation of specific USR projects with different actors involved.
- Create and communicate reports of USR for the continuous improvement of the institution.
- Support different areas or divisions of the university in the definition and detection of social impacts.
- Connect teaching—learning processes with social projects and create dialogues with external actors.
- Support different administrative areas in the implementation of an excellent work climate and environmental practices through the implementation of policies.
• Report and communicate social responsibility practices to different stakeholders (inside and outside of the university) through university website, social media channels, events, etc.

**Self-Diagnosis**

In this step, universities perform a self-diagnosis of USR in order to know how they are in social responsible terms (strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement). In other words, it is an institutional self-reflection of how universities are working in becoming a responsible citizen. Universities analyze themselves to determine the level of social responsibility. This self-diagnosis is participatory and it is performed by different members of the university community, such as internal (staff, professors, and students) and external (members of local communities, government offices, alumni, suppliers, among others). It is not fulfill by a consultancy firm because this is a learning process where key actors are reflecting about everyday life on campus operations, and at the same time they are determining new USR demands. However, the USR team or staff is the one in charge of managing the self-diagnosis.

The self-diagnosis is performed through different research methods such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews. All questions are a reflection of a learning process and continuous improvement. Typically three types of information are collected from this self-diagnosis:

(1) Perceptions of internal actors (qualitative performance indicator);
(2) Results from university performance (quantitative performance indicators);
(3) Expectations of external stakeholders (opinions and suggestions).

The topics of the self-diagnosis (e.g., focus groups, surveys, or interviews) are focused on the four key areas mentioned earlier:

(1) Responsible campus: How our university should be organized for becoming a social and environmental responsible institution?
(2) Professional education: How our university should be organized for educating responsible citizens?
(3) Social knowledge management: How our university should be organized for producing knowledge in order to help societies?
(4) Social participation: How our university should be organized in order to constantly interact with communities for promoting a sustainable and human development?
**Fulfillment**

This step consists in informing and communicating the results of the self-diagnosis to all the groups (internal and external) that participated. The results of the self-diagnosis can be presented in different ways: quantitative data, survey results, reports of focus groups, interview reviews, opinions, and suggestions. For every core area, all the data can be summarized in four areas: strengths, weakness, critical points, and demands/suggestions. It should include a summary of the main results, the selection of the areas chosen for improvement, and the different projects selected, and the reasons why they were chosen. It can be presented through informal talks, meetings, reports, brochures, power point presentations, etc. The purpose of this step is to empower members of the university community in the development of social responsible projects. However, it is important to highlight that universities cannot respond to all the needs and requirements that stakeholders pointed out in the self-diagnosis. Therefore, it is important to communicate and explain why some demands or critical points could not be attended.

After selecting areas for improvement (through the development of projects), universities should create an institutional plan to fulfill these commits. Certain initiatives could end in a short period of time, but others could need an annual planning and evaluation. Hence, universities should commit in the practice of USR in a long term and not only in some periods of time (e.g., with a change of university government). USR must be aligned in the long-term strategic planning of universities.

**Reporting and Communication**

Reporting is a key element in a social responsible process. Corporations are usually in the spotlight due to legitimacy problems, that is why companies must follow specific guidelines for reporting (e.g., GRI, AA 1000). However, universities enjoy good reputation, so they do not need to follow strict and normative guidelines. A credible and useful report regarding USR practices should include:

- Summary of the results of the self-diagnosis;
- Actions developed (improved projects);
- Results obtained (from the projects developed);
- Recommendations and future work.

This report can be annual or biannual and it can be print out or placed on the university web site as a PDF file or in an interactive way in an accessible link on the university homepage. Another way to report and
communicate is through the organization of debates between members of internal and external stakeholders (Jongbloed et al., 2008). In addition, an excellent way of engaging internal and external stakeholders is through the employment of social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. With the use of these platforms, universities can constantly communicate, report, and engage with other groups of stakeholders (students, alumni, young entrepreneurs, etc.) in a more informal way. Another important channel is traditional media (e.g., radio, TV, magazines, newspapers). Using traditional media as a resource for communicating social responsibility and sustainability practices presents opportunities to engage with other groups that are difficult to reach. Media is a potential resource for promoting education and social debate (Carrizo, 2004). Overall, the purpose of reporting/communicating is to facilitate links between campus-based experts and external programs and community efforts (Seminur Topal, 2009).

Each single one of these steps is necessary to diagnostic, develop, evaluate, and communicate socially responsible practices in universities. It is important to perform these steps every two to three years (self-diagnosis, fulfillment, and reporting/communication). According to Vallaeyts et al. (2009), the reason behind in starting over each certain time is that social responsibility is a permanent process of continuous improvement, and it is also an institutional self-reflection of everyday life in campus. If universities only perform diagnosis once, it is risky that old routine habits can come and the dynamics of self-learning can be forgotten.

PRACTICE CASES OF USR IN HISPANIC AMERICA

Perú – Universidad Católica del Perú

The Universidad Católica del Perú has a social responsibility office (Dirección Académica de Responsabilidad Social – DARS) since 2005. This office has showcased how to respond and communicate in time crisis to all departments and offices around campus and to engage and commit all departments in improving affected communities. In August 15, 2007, an earthquake stroked the south coast of Peru. According to Bacigalupo (2008), the office assumed in a timely manner the coordination of this emergency situation. First, it organized the recollection and transfer of help to the emergency area during one month and a half. Second, it developed
the reconstruction phase (planned for a period of three years) mobilizing all the resources that this university could bring to the devastated area.

In that context, the office applied the same principle that universities should follow for the managing of social impacts. In other words, in these types of situations, universities are capable of an efficient transmission of relevant knowledge and technology, and at the same time they generate learning-service spaces where professors and students of any specialty can help and contribute. Particularly, in the Carmen district, Chinca province, the university formed an interdisciplinary work space where all key actors converged: staff, professors, students, citizens, local governments, companies, NGOs, and international cooperation. In sum, the office achieved an important positive impact of using knowledge and technology for the recovering of an affected population. At the same time, it also produced an indirect benefit caused by the employment of teaching and researching resources (specific contributions of Architecture, Urbanism, Psychology, and Law departments) in the affected area. This case taught us that the answers to social demands are assumed by faculties and research centers, but the articulation of joint efforts are assumed by USR team of staff (Bacigalupo, 2008).

On the other hand, the Universidad Católica del Perú has been pioneered in including a theoretical framework of USR adapted to the demands of the university life. The practice of USR in this university is established as an institutional project, engaging university members in the importance of USR in the internal management, environment, teaching, research, and social participation (Dirección Académica de Responsabilidad Social, 2009).

Spain

According to González Alcántara et al. (2010), only 76 universities in Spain are developing university socially responsible practices. However, neither the numbers of campuses, the number of degrees, the number of professors nor the budget are a dependent variable for implementing USR. But certainly the number of students has an influence at the moment of implementing USR. Spanish universities that will likely perform USR practices have between 10,000–20,000 students and 30,000–40,000 that is around 34.21% of the total universities in Spain. Another positive variable for implementing USR is the number of staff. Universities that have a tendency to perform USR have between 251 and 500 staff and 1,501 and 2,500,
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which is around 28.95% of the total of Spanish higher educational institutions. From the study, 48% of the 76 universities encountered have a sustainable office or a sustainable development plan. Typically these offices help in the reduction of contamination, and they also empower ecological consumption among different groups of stakeholders. There is not a unique way of managing USR practices, but it is very positive to create a social responsibility department or office that should be in charge, support, and evaluate all matters regarding USR (González Alcántara et al., 2010).

Colombia — Observatory in USR

Ten universities in Colombia created the USR observatory. It has the purpose of comprehend, reflect, conceptualize, communicate, promote, and share good USR practices through academic research in order to learn from others and contribute to the quality of life. By 2015, the observatory wants to become as a conceptual reference of good practices for higher educational institutions in Latin America.

Colombia — Pontificia Universidad Javeriana

In late 2002, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Colombia created the project Prácticas Sociales Universitarias (Social University Practices). This project has the purpose of strengthen student education with social problems, combining teaching, research, and service functions. The principal feature of this project is that includes social university practices in all the academic programs at this university. Although it is voluntary for students, all the programs must assure that students have the possibility to participate in this project. For this university, any social university practice has three components:

(1) Teaching: it is addressed to the development of theoretical and methodological elements that are unique to all academic programs. It is important that professors must include in their teaching strategies the comprehension and conceptualization of social phenomena. It also reinforces attitudes, abilities, and values among professors/students in order to develop responsible social commitment.

(2) Research: it promotes methodologies and research procedures suitable for the comprehension of social phenomena.
Service: it helps in the involvement of students and professors in social scenarios for the generation of cultural processes and collaborations.

Argentina — Universidad de Buenos Aires (Facultad de Ciencias Económicas)

The Facultad de Ciencias Económicas (School of Economy) of Universidad de Buenos Aires has been working since 2006 in different strategies and projects related to USR. They created a program of educational social practices with the purpose of establishing partnerships (synergies) with different groups. These are some of their achievements: In 2006, they created the National Center of CSR and it was institutionalized the University Volunteer Program. In 2007, they created and developed a class that consists in the integration and application of community projects through service-based learning. In addition, in 2008, they also created the program Amartya Sen, an ethical outreach service-based learning program for undergraduate and graduate students. The objective of this program is to educate a new generation of ethical and responsible professors with higher levels of excellence in new areas of knowledge such as management development. In the same way, they developed in 2012 an elective class in honor to Dr. Bernardo Kliksberg titled Prácticas para la Inclusión Social (Practices for Social Inclusion). This class has the purpose of involving students in specific social interventions, where they can employ resources and knowledge learnt in classes.

University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus, Puerto Rico

The University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras Campus has developed in recent years conscious campaigns to reinforce its commitment with the environment. Students, staff, and professors have been involved in many green projects such as waste, recycling, and energy. The university has also developed an energy policy and a policy management of green spaces around campus, in order to accomplish the goals of the Plan Visión Universidad 2016. In addition, the Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainability, a research center funded by grants from the US Department of Defense (DoD) and the US Department of Education (USDE), created and developed in 2012, a campaign among students that could create the best sustainable ideas for the reduction of energy consumption in the campus.
According to Gomez, Morales, and Vadi (2014), the university decided last year to evaluate its social responsibility and sustainability processes. They are implementing the four steps (commitment, self-diagnosis, fulfillment, and reporting/communication) for the evaluation and improvement of USR practices. In earlier 2013, they have started the self-diagnosis of internal public perceptions (students, professors, and staff). Survey and focus groups are used to evaluate internal public perceptions. A total of 971 people are surveyed, while 30 people will participate in the focus groups (three in total).

These are only few examples of successful university social responsible operations around campuses in Hispanic America. All these examples show us that universities are aware of the importance of synergies for the commitment with other social actors and in the development of local and global communities. Universities should be recognized as institutions of excellence in learning and research for public service, capable of educate future leaders with a great sense of social responsibility that contribute to the economic and social development of societies.

CONCLUSIONS

Today, the practice of social responsibility has not only gained importance and recognition in the corporate world, but also in the academic setting. Higher educational institutions, as centers of learning and knowledge, are also good organizational citizens that worry regarding the impacts that cause their operations to different groups of stakeholders.

In Hispanic America, the practice of USR or RSU has developed greatly in the last decade. USR differs from CSR, because it takes into account specific impacts related to higher educational institutions. According to Vallaeys et al. (2009), these impacts are classified as organizational (related to work climate and environment), educational (academic foundation), cognitive (epistemological research), and social (outreach). In other words, USR reinforces university commitments to current ethical challenges and organizational impacts. USR also introduces an improved relationship between universities and society. In addition, universities work with societies in order to reformulate teaching and research strategies.

Universities should plan, develop, communicate, and evaluate USR following four core working concepts (Vallaeys et al., 2009): Responsible campus, social knowledge management, professional education, and social participation. However, in order to evaluate how an institution is behaving
well or bad in social responsible terms, there are four steps that universities should bear in mind: commitment (of the president, deans, directors), self-diagnosis (performed by internal publics—students, staff, professors, or external publics—local communities, suppliers, governments, other academic institutions, alumni), fulfillment (determine strengths, weakness, critical points, and suggestions of the self-diagnosis), and reporting (communication and compliance). These four steps for evaluating USR practices propose a continuous improvement and a self-reflection of daily operations of higher educational institutions (Vallaey et al., 2009). Universities are institutions that promote knowledge, shape opinions, and promote tendencies. Therefore, universities must rethink themselves, this means how they build knowledge, how educate future professionals, and how relates with other relevant stakeholders.

Universities are the only influencers of sustainable thinking and practice among new generations. Thus, universities should take into account the opportunity they have as agents of education of future leaders, and place social responsibility and ethics as fundamental topics in the curriculum. Universities should not limit to offer social responsibility or sustainable courses in business or environmental degrees; instead they should include CSR in every degree program planning. It is well known that a high-quality education is the key step to impulse the economy and to improve the quality of life.

According to Pesce (2004), there is an important characteristic in the Hispanic American culture and that is the high level of mistrust in public and private sectors. However, Hispanic universities could be the agents in charge to bring trust in public and private organizations through the development of USR practices that involves these key groups of stakeholders. One of the reasons of the broad reception and adoption of the practice of USR could be that universities in this region are committed to really understand, grasp, manage, and achieve to its full potential the practice of social responsibility. It is perhaps because it is truly needed in order for reaching a sustainable economy, society, and environment in Hispanic America. Academic education, research, and innovation are the determinant factors to overcome not only the different challenges that are present in the Hispanic society, but only to reach a solidarity globalization in order to guarantee the well-being of citizens. In this sense, the practice of USR in Hispanic America is a fundamental platform that contributes to the solution of all these problems.

This chapter reviewed the concept, importance, and implementation of USR in Hispanic America. It also showcased USR case practices from
different universities in the region. Due to USR is still an emergent practice among Hispanic universities, further studies could evaluate perceptions of different groups of stakeholders from Hispanic universities that have already implemented and communicated USR practices, to find out how USR has been developed and communicated through the years. This can lead to the discovery of other kind of impacts or improvements that were not considered it in the USR “bible” developed by Vallaeys et al. (2009). In addition, future work could make comparisons and similarities of the employment of social responsible practices between universities in developing regions (e.g., Hispanic America, Eastern Europe, Africa, or Asia). For instance, the Latin American telenovelas (Latin America soap opera) phenomena have created faithful communities of viewers in Asia and Africa. People in Asia and Africa feel recognized with the stories portrayed in telenovelas because it showcases common problems in developing countries, such as poverty, class conflict, immorality, and lack of confidence in public and private institutions (Martı́nez, 2005). Developing countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America share similar obstacles and journeys. Therefore, it should be interest to notice if USR-similar phenomena are also shared by universities in regions like Africa, Asia, or Eastern Europe.

The common sense would tell us that everything that worked in a developed country should also work in a developing country. However, it is impossible to find solutions when culture, customs, and life styles are completely different. That is why the concept and practice of USR was born in Hispanic America and has not been employed in developed countries, because it is Hispanic America’s “thing.”

NOTES


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