

Framework for the development of Social Projection based on an effective approach to University Social Responsibility at UNHEVAL

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ABSTRACT

This article is intended as an approach to the definitions of University Social Responsibility and University Projection / Extension, the relationship between both concepts and the importance of the development of “social capital” within the internal structures of universities, especially that which refers to the organization and student participation. With this previous analysis, a second section will discuss the specific case of the Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizán de Huánuco (UNHEVAL).

Keywords: University Social Responsibility, University Projection / Extension, social capital, universities, internal structures, student participation.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo pretende ser un acercamiento a las definiciones de Responsabilidad Social Universitaria y Proyección / Extensión Universitaria, la relación entre ambos conceptos y la importancia del desarrollo de “capital social” dentro de las estructuras internas de las universidades, especialmente la que se refiere a la organización y participación estudiantil. Con este análisis previo, se tendrá un segundo bloque en el que se discutirá lo expuesto en el caso puntual de la Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizán de Huánuco (UNHEVAL).

Palabras clave: Responsabilidad Social Universitaria, Proyección / Extensión Universitaria, capital social, universidades, estructuras internas, participación estudiantil.

INTRODUCTION

As provided in Article 124 of University Law 30220, University Social Responsibility,

hereinafter RSU, is now a requirement that Peruvian universities, both public and private, must exercise in a mandatory way. This not-so-new modification of the term has been joined by various opinions from sectors that, on the one hand, are reluctant to accept that the social work of universities is now a requirement since this quality was considered innate to the cloisters of higher education. On the other hand, some support the obligatory nature of social work, since they recognize the evolution that universities have undergone over time, which, in most cases, chose to move away from the social and/or ethical formation of students and, on the contrary, changed their direction towards the commercialization of their services. Given that this social commitment is a requirement, it is clear that it is this second perspective that ended up overcoming the first, which brings with it new problems to be raised, mainly if this obligation is being implemented adequately.

This article tries to answer this question and, consequently, determine its incidence in the approach and execution of the University Social Projection, because, although the University Law has not stated it exhaustively, this term is part of the USR. For this purpose, USR and Social Projection activities carried out at the Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizán de Huánuco, hereinafter UNHEVAL, will be taken as a point of analysis. Since this is an isolated case, to avoid any misunderstanding and/or confusion, the first part will focus on providing a general framework of analysis that can serve as a point of reference for other similar works or research. To this end, the evolution of the term “University Social Responsibility”, its origins and appropriateness within the framework of higher education, as well as the main challenges faced in its adequate and effective implementation will be addressed. Likewise, the theoretical aspects of the University Social Projection hereinafter referred to as PSU, will be developed. Then, in the second part, taking as a starting point what has been theoretically exposed, the concepts will be transferred to the practice of USR and USP at UNHEVAL. Finally, conclusions will be drawn on the subject and possible recommendations for the shortcomings found.

EVOLUTION OF THE TERM “UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY”

As Tinoco and Vizarreta (2014) expose, the idea of University Social Responsibility is extracted or migrated from a purely business conception (p.39). It is in this fact that lies the main criticism, since, according to Díaz-Albertini (s/f), several of the methodologies and instruments that originated in the private for-profit activity, had ended up being uncritically adopted by universities and other associations not primarily oriented towards the same purpose (p.152). The author is not wrong, since it is evident that educational activity, whether higher or not, does not have as its main purpose the search for economic benefits, but social welfare. Therefore, social work is innate to this type of organization; social responsibility is not a new aspect of university work. However, as Rama (2006) indicates, after analyzing the evolution of universities in Peru and the repercussions of this process on their configuration, it is neither unnatural nor unnecessary to consider social responsibility as an obligation.

Thus, according to the aforementioned author, Latin American universities have undergone two major reforms (p.13-20). The first was in 1918 with the Cordova Reform, which mainly promoted free education and the intervention of the State for this purpose, reflecting the fact that, by 1960, Peru had 9 universities in the country and only one was private. The second reform, more important for this analysis, took place in the 1960s and its main effect was the spread of private universities in response to the growing demand for students. There were several consequences of this transformation, but perhaps the most evident is the decline in the quality of education and the investment in the ethical formation of the new members of society. For Díaz-Albertini (2015), this was exacerbated by Legislative Decree 882 of 1996, which for the first time allowed the university to be constituted as a private non-profit company (p. 160).

The above has already been developed in previous studies that reveal the fragility of the higher

education system in Peru, the commercialization of the right to education at all levels, coupled with the low quality of education resulted in leaving aside the social responsibility that years ago was an innate part of the work of university faculties. This is the reason why, as stated in the explanatory memorandum of University Law 30220, it was decided to carry out intervention by way of supervision through an impartial entity. In this case, SUNEDU, not only ensures the quality of education but also closes those institutions that evaded this obligation. Thus, of the 144 institutions that were in the measurement period, 94 of them were granted licenses and the remaining 50 were denied permanence (Quiroz 2021, n.d.). Despite this, it remains to be determined whether the quality standards required by SUNEDU, on the one hand, did or did not improve educational quality and, on the other hand, to analyze the impact that this reform had on the conception and execution of University Social Responsibility which, as mentioned in the introduction, has not only been included and required of universities in the aforementioned Law, but has also been defined as:

“The ethical and effective management of the impact generated by the university on society due to the exercise of its functions: academic, research and extension services and participation in national development at different levels and dimensions; it includes the management of the impact produced by the relationships among the members of the university community, on the environment, and on other public and private organizations that are stakeholders. University social responsibility is the foundation of university life, it contributes to sustainable development and the welfare of society. It commits the entire university community (art. 124 of the University Law 30220)”.

For Miranda *et al.* (2021), this and other definitions given by the law, such as those of social projection, are imprecise, which leads each university to implement social responsibility policies indistinctly, giving rise to a variety of forms of university-society relations (p. 2746). As complemented by Miranda-Suárez (2019) and RED ENARSU (2017), some replaced the terms university extension or social projection with

RSU, while others merged both terms or joined them under the denomination of university social welfare (s/p). From the above, it is clear that the first problem lies in the denomination of the term since this is the starting point to then design University Social Responsibility, a task that goes beyond having an office or division within each university because if the definition starts from identifying this work with the management of the impact of universities on society, it is clear that an articulated intervention is required in each space and activity of these institutions

Para ello, un primer acercamiento respecto a la delimitación de la denominación la tiene Vallaes (2018), para quien son cuatro los tipos de impactos los que la universidad debe gestionar de manera socialmente responsable, mismos que se dividen en dos ejes principales: uno organizacional y otro académico. Dentro del primer bloque se encuentran los impactos internos y externos; dentro del segundo bloque se tienen los impactos educativos y cognitivos (p. 3). A su vez, los impactos internos se refieren a la gestión de los efectos laborales y medioambientales que tiene la institución, en ello se deja ver la trascendencia de la educación en la vida de los estudiantes.

Herein lies the first difference with corporate social responsibility, since students cannot in any way be considered “clients” of universities, the educational services they acquire will have a long-term impact on their lives and their relations with society, the clear example being jobs and working life in general; while, on the other hand, the services acquired in companies have a short-term effect and what is acquired is easily disposable.

As for external impacts, reference is made to the relations that the university has with society in general, especially with communities in vulnerable situations. This is the inclusion of a social projection or university extension, not as a mere appendix of university social responsibility, but as one of its pillars which, although they converge, should not be confused or made invisible. Regarding the academic block, the educational impacts refer to student training and the cognitive impacts on the development of reflection and social intervention through research.

From the above, it is clear that the concept of university social responsibility implies an intervention in all aspects of university life, both in the training of students and their welfare, in the research that they and the teachers carry out, as well as in the working life that follows since they are the professionals who will intervene in the development of society. Understanding this basic concept will make it possible to design better social responsibility strategies that are effective and sustainable.

CONCEPT AND ROLE OF UNIVERSITY SOCIAL PROJECTION

As was explained in the previous section, social responsibility is the first point of development that will later allow focus on more specific areas of it, such as social projection or university extension. It should be clarified that, although the PSU is part of the SRU, specifically within the external impacts of the university, this does not imply that it is absorbed by it. This erroneous conclusion prevents the design of adequate and sustainable university outreach projects. Consequently, university outreach or extension is part of the development of social responsibility, but it is not the same and should not be absorbed by it.

With this in mind, the next step is to define social outreach. Thus, according to Miranda Suárez *et al.* (2021), the social function that universities develop in social outreach refers to the interaction between territory and university, which enables the generation, transfer and dissemination of knowledge, promoting possible transformations in the socio-economic structure of their environment (p. 2749). For Giménez (2003), cited in Tinoco and Vizarrata (2014), this contribution can be made in two directions: toward its student body and towards the immediate external environment (p. 40). That is to say, although the first approach of social projection is with the university's environment, the repercussions that the entity exerts on its students have not been left aside, so that projection should also be understood as internal structural transformation. It is possible to affirm that the sustainable achievement of interactions with the environment begins with a

solid internal model, which, according to Díaz-Albetini (2015), is called “social capital” (p. 163).

As explained by the author cited above, social capital should be understood as the cultural and social structure characteristics that facilitate collaboration, cooperation and collective action among individuals, collectives, groups, organizations and institutions. Having good social capital reduces uncertainty and transaction costs in projects or similar efforts; it facilitates coordination, which increases the effectiveness of project effects; it reduces authoritarian relationships and encourages social participation. It is this factor that is lacking in the design of university projection/extension.

According to Castro Martínez (s/f), quoted by Tinoco and Vizarrata (2014), while in the North universities are encouraged to participate directly in the economic development of their region, through a closer link with the productive sector, in Latin America, the adoption of extension as an academic activity led universities to participate more actively in the social development of the people, often filling the gaps left by the State (p.40). Thus, if the purpose is direct social intervention, it seems inconceivable that the university develops interventions in its environment ignoring the internal deficiencies it may present, since, as a fictitious entity, the university is personified and acts through its teachers, administrative staff and, above all, students. All of them are part of this social capital that in the short, medium and long term are the ones who design and execute any type of university projection/extension. The importance of strengthening social capital in terms of social responsibility and, therefore, university projection/extension is reflected in one of the studies carried out by Miranda Suárez *et al.* (2021), who, through a survey, found that in the case of university statements regarding environmental disasters, 61.5% of universities do not issue any type of statement and only 38.5% do so, but only after students and university unions have pressured for it, but not as a socially sensitive institution (p. 2756).

The lack or lack of commitment and participation of the internal structures of the university, especially of the students, in the gestation and

development of university projection, has diverse and different causes. However, perhaps one of the most identifiable the Peruvian case, according to Gómez (2019), is due to the slow and turbulent evolution of the university-society relationship (s/p). Thus, in Peru until the 1980s, the approach of universities to the social context was asymmetric and unidirectional in the early years, as a result of the highly differentiated social classes and economic asymmetry, which generated limited access to higher education; over the years, this relationship was transformed into a more horizontal and interactive one, especially with the most vulnerable communities and sectors. However, this rapprochement was later truncated by political violence, which forced most universities to work within their campuses. Even after the recovery and pacification process, the internal structures of higher education were disrupted and gave way to new problems and social stigmas. While private universities reoriented their relations with companies and took a more mercantilist approach, national universities resumed their previous forms with many difficulties and, in most cases, without funding (Miranda-Suárez 2010, n.p.). From the above, it is evident that one of the causes for the lack of interest and participation of students is the new forms that universities had to take after the internal armed conflict experienced in the country. Therefore, the first response to generating greater and more sustainable social intervention through university outreach lies in generating greater collaboration and a sense of identity among students.

UNIVERSITY SOCIAL PROJECTION AT THE HERMILIO VALDIZÁN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF HUÁNUCO

As has been exposed in previous works, there is a clear lack of university social projection at Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizán, hereinafter UNHEVAL (Reeves 2015, p. 12), even though, as defined in the University Law, this type of activity together with what, globally, should be understood as university social responsibility, is a mandatory criterion for the accreditation of universities. The first cause of this lack is due to the inexperience in the development

and execution of projects, both of teachers and students, since, until then, social interventions were not mandatory and, if they were carried out, they had more welfare and/or paternalistic nature, but failed to have a sustainable impact. However, the reason why, up to now, there are no university projection/outreach plans implemented by the university in general and not as isolated cases, lies, in our opinion, in the little or no student participation.

As can be seen on UNHEVAL's web page, there are very few student organizations within the university; those that do exist and are recognized by their respective faculties have a purely academic nature, but no social responsibility. Perhaps the clearest participation of students is reflected in their pre-professional internships. As Muñoz (2012) states, pre-professional internships have become the perfect vehicle to relate and link the social activity of students and their academic progress, thus promoting processes of sustainable change (p. 5) from different careers (psychology, sociology, law, architecture, among others) students are inserted in workspaces that interact with the direct and indirect environment of the university, not to mention that, for the most part, carrying out internships requires agreements and alliances with different public and private entities, which are maintained over time and through which projects and interventions other than internships can be carried out.

Despite the above, although internships are an effective vehicle, they may not be the most appropriate, since many of the agreements are framed exclusively in the labor sphere and do not give rise to fields of social projection, which makes this an important, but not sustained avenue. Therefore, as an alternative way, the study proposes to generate spaces of greater student participation, especially those that give freedom and independence to students, so they can not only participate and generate their own spaces of social projection but also put pressure on the university to have these spaces inside and outside their campuses.

CONCLUSIONS

The first point to emphasize in this final reflection is the importance of University Social Responsibility, although it is a concept that, as mentioned, has had and has a constant evolution, the factor that remains over time is the social commitment that imposes on the country's universities, private and public, a commitment that makes them responsible for the impacts generated both internally and externally, especially to their students, who are not mere “customers or consumers” of a service, but, on the contrary, exercise the fundamental right of education, stipulated both in our Constitution and in various international documents. Thus, it is clear that USR is a global concept that matters and intervenes in all aspects of university life, one of them being university projection or extension.

The latter is a concept that, as mentioned above, is part of USR and, as such, nourishes and strengthens it; however, it should not be confused with it or included in an unthinking way as many universities have done in recent years; they are areas of development that complement each other, but they are not the same. While social projection has to do with direct intervention in the social structure of the university, both internal and external, even though, in principle, it is identified with intervention in the environment, this way of thinking must be changed and also focus on the development of students and teachers since they are the ones who make effective and even promote and pressure for such social intervention to be carried out.

Much has been said and questioned about the actions of the State in the supervision of quality in higher education, canons of compliance have been imposed, such as teaching research and social projection. However, the flaw in such regulation is the mere demand for compliance, which leads to implementing the requirements in an imprecise and improvised manner, with which, although there is a quality improvement, it is a screen that hides the real problems. This is precisely what happens in the case of the implementation of university social responsibility and social projection, which are fundamental pillars of a university with a social conscience, however, to make them a reality, it is necessary to have student

awareness and identification, to generate a “social capital” that goes beyond the commitment to carry out pre-professional practices, on the contrary, that is given by the initiative to contribute to the social development of the community in which the university is located.

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