University Social Responsibility: State of the art

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to carry out a systematic review of the state of the art of research on university social responsibility in different articles published in various databases, to answer the question: in what aspects should university social responsibility (USR) be improved? As for the methodology, the approach followed in this article is qualitative and the method is a systematic review. It was concluded that the main results reached on the subject of USR in these publications are oriented to the proposal of regulations that rule or guide the processes of Social Responsibility; also, that Social Responsibility (SR) is a new way of acting that brings together each social element, estimates the impact of the different actions and foresees and promotes relevant improvements.

Keywords: Social responsibility, university, society.

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene por objetivo realizar una revisión sistemática del estado del arte de investigaciones acerca de la responsabilidad social universitaria en diferentes artículos publicados en diversas bases de datos, de modo que se responda a las interrogante ¿En qué aspectos se debe mejorar la Responsabilidad Social Universitaria? En cuanto a la metodología, el enfoque que se sigue en este artículo es el cualitativo y el método el de revisión sistemática. Se concluyó que los principales resultados a los que se arriban en el tema de RSU en estas publicaciones se orientan a la propuesta de normativa que regule o encamine los procesos de Responsabilidad Social; además, que la Responsabilidad Social es un nuevo modo de accionar que confluye cada elemento social, estima el impacto de las diferentes acciones y prevé e impulsa mejoras pertinentes.

Introduction

Social responsibility in today's world has been incorporated as an essential work policy guideline for public and private entities to develop actions aimed at guaranteeing a favorable, stable, and sustainable life in the towns where the activities they develop have an impact; however, in a university, this construct has to be conceived with greater commitment and in the most comprehensive way possible, since the impact of this academic institution is national and universal (Pacheco *et al*., 2020).

The importance of SR in the university is based on the fact that this institution assumes its role in training students in such a way that they identify and become aware of the solution of social problems and the realization of aspirations of the human group on which a higher education institution impacts, for example, the current situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic is a case of solution as part of social responsibility (Hurtado *et al*., 2020). That is, it is not that social responsibility necessarily has to be a subject in the university curriculum, but that it should be a transversal axis that allows, in planning and action, a performance that corresponds to social demands and contributes to the sustainable development of a nation (Medina *et al*., 2018).

But, as Medina *et al*. (2018) themselves refer, it is not only about students and their training, but about the entire university community, all the strata, in terms of their immersion in the social responsibility approach as a line of thought and institutional policy, which means that acting must be evident in the collectivity, it has to denote knowledge of the reality and consequent conduct.

The dimensions or manifestations of social responsibility are based on an axiological body, a set of values that allow its realization without affecting any member of society, on the contrary, favoring the durability of human groups as such, since this training in values of social responsibility comes from university education and thus, substantial guidelines such as the vision of quality of life, love, and respect, care for the common good - in the diachronic and synchronic senses - as well as the profound notion of justice and equity can be transversal to the social, cultural, economic, and environmental spheres of social responsibility; that is to say, the cultivation of the values that have been pointed out, at least as bases of other axiological bodies, is determinant to educate in the university and provide society with highly qualified professionals so that everything related to social responsibility becomes concrete, becomes evident (Núñez and Bermúdez, 2019).

The perspective of social responsibility in the university allows affirming that it is necessary to guarantee this action inherent to educational institutions, firstly and teleologically, to be considered in everything related to strategic planning, so that it acquires levels of institutional policy guidelines and, beyond the authorities, teachers, and students who pass through the university, responsibility is maintained as the north and horizon of this Institution (Gairín and López-Crespo, 2019). In addition, already with functional essence, it is necessary to incorporate in the curriculum and in the syllabus specific aspects that lead to actions that lead teachers and students, during their stay in teaching or training, as appropriate, to carry out activities that, on the one hand, solve social problems and, on the other hand, internalize the culture of SR in the university community and, consequently in the population; therefore, management should not only be circumstantial but with vision (Martí-Noguera *et al*., 2018).

Now, everything that in social responsibility is developed in the university will have its impact, as already mentioned, on the work, in the performance of the profession. The idea is, then, that by being a qualified professional, beyond the eagerness for public or private investment, the university graduate can direct and persuade so that social responsibility is considered a priority, so that the competencies in training and the business, market consider parameters of social responsibility in productive performance and profitability, in the broadest sense of this concept. To assume social responsibility as a line of action

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is to guarantee a posteriori greater work, greater investment, and the security of returns, both for the companies that provide work to university students and for a nation, in terms of its public investment and the business holdings, it also has (Ahumada-Tello *et al*., 2018).

Likewise, Hernández *et al*. (2017) argue that USR is conceived from its link with the context, focusing on its mission of professional training and innovation and knowledge development. On the other hand, ESR is an obligation to the environment giving a plus and competitive advantage to the company, which gives it positioning in its field, so that the university and the company are constituted by active and reactive agents that establish essential interactions for their evolution, which produces the articulation of researchers and entrepreneurs. As Miotto (2018) also argues that through dialogue and participation of the actors, the USR, innovation, and research will be essential tools to legitimize universities. For Kent *et al*. (2018), a deficient factor is a lack of communication to students regarding USR and how to participate in it, which derives from the overlooked conception of this activity; that is, even when social responsibility has been considered normatively as a function and duty of the Peruvian university, the conception that has been developed even within the university community is that of a second-class action and, therefore, omissible.

There is also disarticulation in the triad of government, university, and business, lacking greater rapprochement and dialogue with the population. Therefore, according to Chávez and Villanueva (2019), what is appropriate is a development that integrates the university, state, and business to achieve an adequate strategic articulation of innovation. The aforementioned is the Triple Helix strategy, in which the articulation of these members will produce important political and social changes bringing as a consequence great development in all entities. Consequently, the contribution of each member allows the development of innovative projects that will bring the development of the company, and knowledge and reduce social and technological gaps. Because if this situation of disarticulation continues, it will not have the impact demanded by the correct

application of USR in society. It is also necessary to apply the approaches suggested by Olarte and Ríos (2015): humanistic, pedagogical, ethical, and socio-curricular to transform the approaches to USR management in many universities.

Vallaeys (2018) indicates that there are weaknesses regarding the development of the RSU in Peru, among them he mentions that this should be an ethical commitment of the university, it can be the third mission of the university for the solidary social extension, it would be a series of good internal and external practices, referring to the inclusion and retention of underprivileged and marginalized university students; These fallacies are not entirely related to USR, because many university institutions are still not clear about what to do in their work of SR, for example, some consider that decorating the square of a human settlement would be a social responsibility to the community when it is quite the opposite. This responsibility is part of the contribution to the community in terms of more inherent things like education, health support, and other activities that should contribute to the construction of society.

Currently, and for many years, it has been evident the deficient commitment of organizations and companies in Peru concerning society and the environment, even when there are legal regulations related to corporate SR. Also, and because this research addresses the SR of a university, the University Law 30220 (2014) contemplates in articles 124 and 125 both the definition of SR in the university context and its standards to be met as a requirement for accreditation.

However, the role of SR is assumed as using the budget allocated to carry out a certain activity in a certain area on a scheduled date, no actions are planned that benefit economically or organizationally that sector of the population, and no talks or orientations and job facilities that are useful to the population are planned. And these premises are related to a poor conception of strategic management if this concept is even taken into account in the management of the study site. The systematic evaluation of the institution, the definition of objectives, goals, and the strategies that the institution should take into account to achieve them, as well as the resources that should

be allocated for their proper execution, are ignored. There is a gap between what is declared by the managers and the actions undertaken for strategic management. Also, although companies have sufficient resources and talent for social actions, they often simply do not carry them out because they ignore the benefits to the company itself that would result from such actions.

The purpose of this article is to execute a systematic review of the state of the art of research on university social responsibility in different articles published in databases from 2017 to 2020, to answer the question: in what aspects should University Social Responsibility be improved?

Regarding the topic developed in this article, there have been several investigations such as Jiménez (2020), in "SR through codes of ethics and conduct: A proposal for the government of the University", which aimed to propose a legal tool that regulates university behavior, a hermeneutic and propositional study with a qualitative approach, allows concluding that it is necessary to implement a code of ethics and conduct in the University, because it is necessary to reverse the series of misconduct that the university institution has shown, such as fraudulent titles or the slowness, and even lack, in accountability.

In addition, Véliz et al. (2020), in Management procedure to ensure the quality of a university: Case study Universidad Técnica de Manabí, a study with qualitative approach and case study design, which aimed to demonstrate the relationship between the evaluation and accreditation model and the management system of the university, concluded that the guarantee to obtain a higher university categorization and accredit the different faculties is in the implementation of a management model that ensures quality in function, axes as the permanent improvement for the achievement of accreditation.

Regarding the research conducted in our country - Peru- is Céspedes (2019), who in "Perception of stakeholders, of university social responsibility in a public university", a study of the qualitative approach of emergent design, whose sampling was of focus groups constituted by, in total, 27 units, which responded to a semi-structured interview, concluded that the most critical aspects of the university where the study was conducted were research and social participation, which denotes deficiencies of university management in these areas.

In addition, Henríquez et al. (2018), in "Organizational learning as a tool for the university that learns to be socially responsible", a qualitative study of the theoretical design, whose objective was to respond to the problem of the organization of social responsibility, concluded that the organization for university social responsibility must be consensual: university-community, regulated, participatory, cultural, promoting leadership, instrumented and continuous training.

Ruiz-Bejarano and Alastor (2018) in "The organization of conferences, in the academic classroom: Teaching Innovation and University Social Commitment", a qualitative study of theoretical-propositional design whose objective was to propose planning that sensitizes teachers and students in the need to implement innovation and SR activities, concluding that it is necessary to address innovation and social responsibility in the ethical, civic, cultural, and social aspects, but through academic conferences that develop commitment, cooperative work and leadership, but assuming a characteristic of transversality within the university training. Therefore, USR should be taken into account by all members of the university transversally in their activities because it is important to understand what it is and to be prepared to assume the responsibilities and functions that it demands (Vallaeys, 2019).

For Aldeanueva and Arrabal (2018), university social responsibility implies, as stated in different publications and social media, the implementation of a series of policies and strategies that are viable in terms of their concretion; in addition, it should be included as a line of research. The dissemination of everything related to USR, considering the strength of social networks, must also be through these media, not only as a guarantee of knowledge, but also for the rooting of this university function in the thinking and action of each member of the university community and, subsequently, of each professional and worker. According to Niebles-Núñez et al. (2018), the USR must be incorporated urgently, in the face of

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the vertiginous changes that are operating in the world, in university curricula, since it is the guarantee of responsible productive praxis; that is, it is not to be implemented as a subject, but as an element of transversal and transdisciplinary character, so that it is rooted and coherently concrete at the individual and collective level.

The theoretical perspectives that guide university social responsibility are that of the entrepreneurial university and that of the stakeholders; the first refers to that there is a mutual contribution between the university and the company since the solid training in USR that a university student receives has a positive impact on the performance that he/she develops in an employing entity; likewise, the company ensures employability and permanence in the market based on the viability and concreteness of what the professional has learned in terms of USR; the second states that each member of an entity is part of the interest group of the university and the company, since both entities are at the same level, thus ensuring the conditions that allow the continuous functionality of the employing entities and their community and the university as a training institution (Almeida and Arrechavaleta, 2018).

Methodology

The approach followed in this article is qualitative and the method is that of systematic review, since research papers are analyzed, whether the qualitative or quantitative approach to the research topic, to answer the question that guides this work, the process followed is the location of the articles in different repositories such as Scopus, Scielo, Latindex, Dialnet, universities, among others, considering that although the recognized indexers have works that follow the necessary evaluations, the works are not always rigorous, being on a par with other databases or redirectors that should not be ignored, such as Google Scholar or Researchgate, considering what is specified by Reyes (2020). An exclusion criterion is that work with a systematic review, documentary review, bibliometric, and meta-analysis articles will be omitted.

As referred by Jiménez and Aldana (2020) and Páramo (2020), the systematic review is a process through which the body of existing knowledge on a given topic is explained, following certain parameters and according to statements or questions that guide the inquiry, thus synthesizing the set of primary studies. In this sense, they constitute an important basis for the conduct of other studies. The eligibility of these investigations depends to a large extent on the extent to which the explanations or interpretations of the knowledge found are deepened.

Results and discussion

Considering the question specified in this research, the results respond as follows:

- In what aspects should USR be improved according to the different publications?

The studies that have been reviewed are generally aimed at proposing improvements at the level of regulation, planning, communication, awareness, and motivation, as observed in the research by Jiménez (2020), Ruiz-Bejarano, Alastor (2018), and Kent *et al*. (2018).

The studies conducted by Véliz *et al*. (2020), Céspedes (2019); Henríquez *et al*. (2018), are rather at the explanatory and diagnostic levels, in what refers to the problem of university social responsibility, which denotes in all cases, serious shortcomings.

The articles reviewed by Jiménez (2020) and Céspedes (2019) conclude on the need to regulate social responsibility in the University, overcome critical aspects such as research and social participation, having to include it in the field of research (Aldeanueva Arrabal, 2018).

The conclusions of Véliz *et al*. (2020); González *et al*. (2020) on the other hand, are directed to the need to implement quality and quality, management models.

Henríquez *et al*. (2018), Ruiz-Bejarano and Alastor (2018) and Niebles-Núñez *et al*. (2018) conclude that the organization for university social

responsibility should be to bring together all the strata of the University and incorporate the ethical, civic, cultural, formative, and social aspects, making this institutional duty an integral action.

Table 1

Research results

Questions	What are the research objectives developed concerning USR in the different publications?		What are the main conclusions reached on the subject of USR in these publications?			
Topic	Proposed regulation /planning	Assumption of quality models	Implementation of regulations	Difficulties and proposed actions	Implementation of quality models	Development of actions to raise awareness
No. of studies	3	3	2	1	2	1

Figure 1. Research objectives were developed in the USR studies.

Figure 1 represents the prevalence of the objectives that are usually proposed when researching university social responsibility, which develops proposal topics in about half of these.
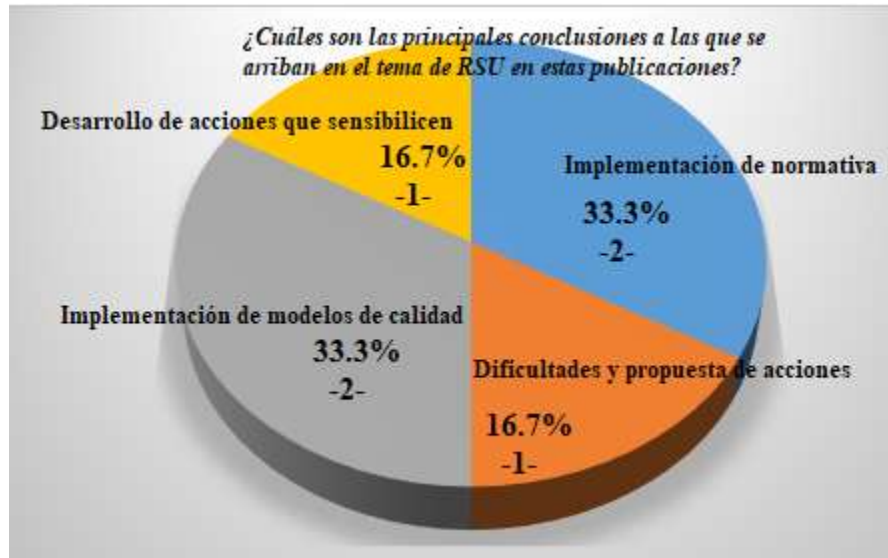
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Figure 2. Main conclusions reached on the MSW issue.

Figure 2 shows the conclusions reached in the studies on university social responsibility, with those that consider the development and implementation of regulations to govern these actions and the assumption of quality models being prevalent.

Likewise, another important contribution is made by the studies carried out by Hernández (2017); Miotto *et al*. (2018); Chávez and Villanueva (2019) regarding the link in professional training with the context through dialogue and interaction of the main actors which will lead to innovation and research with the participation of the Triple Helix; state, business, university, generating great development, knowledge, reduction of social and technological gaps.

As can be evidenced, the studies about social responsibility reviewed are aimed at making proposals on how to regulate this important activity of the University in general, as well as making diagnoses of the situation of university social responsibility, which is found, as deduced, at a deficient level, as pointed out by Jiménez (2020); Ruiz-Bejarano, and Alastor (2018), among others.

In coherence with the aforementioned, it is possible to affirm that the university community has a continuous need to rethink its perspective towards society, and therefore, its functions, taking as important factors economic, social, and cultural situations since the essence of social responsibility is to offer a better service to the citizen.

Likewise, the conclusions prevailing in the literature reviewed are essentially directed to the implementation of improvements that optimally make viable the actions of university social responsibility and the need for commitment to integrality of these processes, as referred, among others, by Véliz *et al*. (2020); Henríquez *et al*. (2018).

These university needs, obligations, and commitments are intended to lead this institution to be classified as a socially responsible community, a perspective to be reached by university students and society.

Thus, what was found is linked to what was specified by Hurtado *et al*. (2020), who states the adaptability of the university student to academic and emotional social commitments, as the axis of the work of social responsibility in the university, that is, to be able to solve in a complementary way or to guide the problems in the mentioned contexts.

Because, precisely, an act of social responsibility in the university, which is properly developed, will involve, as Núñez and Bermúdez (2019) and

Almeida and Arrechavaleta (2018) argue, social responsibility is based on theoretical perspectives and concretized practices, which follow a guideline of principles and which has repercussions on the organizational, educational, cognitive, and epistemic, as well as social functioning; the impact it produces should promote growth and development in these environments.

Thus, about the objectives that are addressed for the USR in the articles reviewed, it is concluded that the need for confrontation through mission and values to the negative impacts caused by the university is the main one since it will always lead to the action of neutralizing these negative effects through university functions, resulting in the prevalence of studies that develop the objective of proposing rules that regulate the processes of SR.

While referring to the main conclusions reached on the subject of USR in these publications, it is concluded that it is a new mode of action based on a more fluid and direct relationship with social factors, taking into account the effects it will produce, and if these complete the social expectations with a boost and significant improvements considering of great importance the triple helix: state, business, university and the impact that this articulation will generate through innovation, research, knowledge in society reducing social gaps (Chavez and Villanueva 2019).

Conclusions

It can be concluded from the literature that has been reviewed that the strategic management of universities has shown a growing interest in planning in terms of university social responsibility; however, what has been planned, in general, has not been implemented, or has been implemented in a distorted manner.

When it has not materialized, it is because the perception of social responsibility has not been valued in its real dimension, that is, as an activity and duty of the university in terms of promoting sustainability in the economic, social, and environmental fields of a nation and, specifically, of a region.

When it has been implemented, it has almost always been distorted, that is as if it were an activity in which a vulnerable population is chosen and given food and a moment of solace, thus denaturalizing the essence of social responsibility and showing deficient strategic management.

The different approaches sustain how important university social responsibility is and explain how it should function properly; they also consider the environmental, human, and social aspects as part of all strategic management, so it follows that these aspects have to be enhanced in the Peruvian university and, especially in the National University of Ucayali, even more so, considering that it is located in the Peruvian jungle.

Finally, the ideology and teleology of any university entity should consider, not only because it is a duty imposed by the regulations, university social responsibility as a central element of strategic management, so its incorporation in the administrative and educational aspects, both at the level of planning and practices, is an urgent need.

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