# Educational Perspective of Social Responsibility: University Experiences

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## Abstract

*Social Responsibility has acquired great importance from the reflection of the educational institutions social function on their key processes: formation, research and cultural extension, which impact the economic, social and environmental development of the society. The objective is to analyze the experiences obtained during the participatory self- diagnose and the course of action followed to improve socially responsible actions in the Coahuila state university. The methodology used is based on the self-diagnose of the effective relationship between the university and the society. The results show the strengths and improvement areas on different areas of the social responsibility study, integrated from the individual perspective to the collective analysis and discussion, which support the decision making process of the strategically objectives at the institution. It is evident the necessity of creating debates to clarify the new perspective on explicitly expressing the universities' social role in a context where human talent.*

***Keywords:*** civic education, professional training, social responsibility, human talent.

## 1. Introduction

The economic, technological and social transformations that have been strongly unchained since the second half of the XX century, which have also generated untold social processes shaped on the globalization and the knowledge society pose new challenges facing higher levels education (Aranguiz & Rivera, 2011). XXI century, framed by the new historical process of globalization, where the *ICT* development is the constantly key which shapes the society creating new cultural forms of social organization with new types of job performance requirements and the constant renewal of the human knowledge, makes necessary to establish how to develop education programs according to the global reality, where the primordial social factor to continue with the scientific and technological development is still the human being as the center and motor of knowledge (Colina Colina, 2013). The university must take on the critical analysis of the society in function of the context it lies on, in relationship with the learning process and the knowledge construction. In this context, Social Responsibility has acquired great importance, from the reflection of the social function of the educational institutions at their key processes: education, research and cultural extension which impacts the economic, social and environmental aspects of the society. An essential aspect for the universities is the comprehension of their social function in the education and management of the human talent which is demanded by society. The formation of fully trained professionals, conscious of the well-being is a key element to accomplish the fundamental principles of the university social function expressed through three essential dimensions: quality, relevance and equity .F. Vallaeys (2013, pág. 193) affirms "The wave of Social Responsibility has reached the University but in reality very few really understand what it means for the academic world too well accustomed to the routine of their" university extension and social projection ", their" student volunteerism "and His "solidarity social service". In the literature review a dominant approach is the social participation perspective in the formation of human talent. As an illustration Pascarella, Ethington and Smart (1988) focused on human and civic values, while Astin, Sax and Avalos (1999) are more oriented to the impact of voluntary participation in service activities.

In this sense, Ortiz de Montellano (2000) affirms that the majority of the evaluative efforts are centered on the results, job professional skills and the disciplinary knowledge, which must be related to the social impact, ethics and actions sustainability. That is why, the author of reference, given the necessity to form committed people to their environment and fellows, proposed a model which integrates critical thinking, empathy and commitment capacity as effective means to measure and value the social responsibility features in the professionals-academic formation of university students. In the university social conscience analysis, De la Calle (2010) proposes a model centered on the university students and their integral formation, composed by the commitment to others; personal values development, social conscious formation, bigger knowledge of reality and suffering from others, social commitment; on the basis in which it assesses the effective impact of the academic formation on the social responsibility and the social responsible performance of the university student.

According to Gaete Quezada (2011, p 118) the study of the relationships among different approaches of university management and its social responsibility lies on the transformational perspective which establishes the main guidelines of social responsible behavior on the university tasks (what), while the management perspective and norms establish the ways which universities use to express this behavior (how), oriented by two of the most important principles of social responsibility at its conceptual level: transparency and participation. The transformational approach of the USR (university social responsibility) management expresses the main role and leadership of the university to create a better society, more equitable, just and more sustainable through a reflective and purposeful character facing problem solutions and social needs. This approach is reflected on its substantive processes; education, investigation and social commitment. On education through the molding of students' talents for them to be introduced to the labor life with more professional skills as well as in the society as responsible citizens. In the reviewed empirical studies about USR, it is observed that there is an orientation to the identification of students' knowledge level (Diaz Molina, M., 2011; Facal Santiago, S., 2011). Diaz Molina & Facal Santiago (2011), Their descriptive, exploratory study on the business management science shows that knowledge does not come from academic sources but informal external sources and that students perceive the relationship between professional roles and the sustainable development model; that students' initiative can generate activities of respect and environment preservation and that the students' solidarity in classrooms or the current environmental problems consciousness are topics not yet promoted despite their importance in the students' professional and personal education.

As a manifestation of the incipient diffusion stage oriented to the attitude and behavior analysis which are the skills required by society and companies, topics on which our investigation is based, Dominguez Pachón (2009) in the analysis of transit of the extension to the social projection at the Latin-American universities, indicates that the traditional conception of the social extension has been diluted generating new forms that incorporate the innovation, social inclusion and internationalization, technical assistance, community and business training, where specialization and knowledge expansion prevail, new forms of creating knowledge, the growing practical character of knowledge, the need to build social networks, all of these being recognized as modalities for the human talent development from the universities. In the Mexican context, Morales (2012) says that a reflection on the USR is recently present at the Mexican universities highlighting the first initiatives. He also indicates that there is also lack of reflection on the way which Mexican state universities are heading to, which problems are more due to the great number of students, an extensive bureaucracy and financing. This reflection is develop in the frame of the addition of state and private universities to the Global Pact of Nations, as a voluntary initiative of institutional sustainability which purpose is to promote responsible actions from companies, schools, NGO's and others (Sagahón Velazco, 2013); and the creation of the University Social Responsibility Mexican Observatory (OMERSU) with the purpose of achieving congruence between the speech and acts through a focus on the education and its economic, social and environmental impact. The University Social Responsibility Mexican Observatory (OMERSU), sponsored by the National Association of Higher Education Universities and Institutions (ANUEIS), pretends to achieve congruence between what is said and what is done through a focused approach on education and its economic, social and environmental impact. The concept of USR is highlighted as a university's effective ability to respond to the education needs in the society and context where the university is through some substantive functions such as: teaching, investigation, extension and internal management. These functions must be motivated by just pursue, solidarity and social equity, through the construction of successful answers to the challenges implied in the sustainable human development promotion. (Gargantini, D., 2014, p. 22).

This reflects that the public Mexican university is also immersed in the social responsibility at its ethical, social, educative, cognitive and organizational level as a new perspective of the human talent formation, on our vision and daily activities which implies new challenges and strategically defiance on the educational, cognitive and social participation aspect. These aspects are shown in the following methodology described in this research. Nowadays, strategies at universities are about introducing a commitment to the social and economic transformation of our country, as part of the social responsibility, through the generation of knowledge and innovation of the university environment. At the knowledge society, contributions to the sustainability, the formation of competent citizens, participative and committed citizens to social problems, the promotion of social responsible values at the university community, applying social responsibility criteria at the university management, are more appropriate and significant. So that, some universities formulate values, projects or strategically plans framed on the social responsibility even though this USR is not explicit in the mission or vision and it is not integrated to the strategically axes yet.

However, the majority of the universities include in their institutional philosophy the social responsibility, but its management is not an implicit or explicit fact which is incorporated to the organizational culture. In the world context distinguished by the transit to the knowledge society where the creation of wealth comes from the education and human talent, the next question is formulated: Are the universities enabling professionals with ethical values to act as an exemplary citizen, prepared to be change agents through the generation and application of technical, social and environmental innovative knowledge who can contribute to the sustainable development of their region-country? The search of answers to this question is the based for the present problem. The production and diffusion of the knowledge is one of the most important responsibilities of the university assuming a social leadership in the creation of knowledge based on the strength of interdisciplinary aspects, promoting the critical thinking and active citizenship (UNESCO, 2009), as well as promoting the scientists' sensibility for the social impact of their investigations. The university must search for answers in the generation of knowledge of the social problems in the following aspects: access to the university, racial inequality, and moral development of students, science and technological innovation. As we have mentioned in other studies, the higher education institutions represent a center of knowledge centralization with benefits for the society which requires to contribute much more and be a key factor to generate an integrated society with other participants like the government, companies, and communities, to support the global sustainable development. (Montalvo, et al 2016). Thus, considering the approaches, ambits and methodology of the self-diagnosis of the USR on F. Vallaeys (2009a), and the contributions of Gaete Quezada (2011) about the transformational perspective, the purpose of this project as part of an investigation project of social responsibility, is to analyze the experiences during the process of the participative self-diagnosis and the construction of the short term and medium term actions program to improve the social responsible action on the different interested groups linked to the professional education of the university students at the business administration and economics careers at the University Autonomy of Coahuila. The project's structure includes the methodology used, the results and the conclusions.

## *2. Methodology*

### 2.1 Type, stages and approach of the investigation.

The type of investigation used is qualitative in the basis because it emphasizes the context importance of the universities, and the function and meaning of the human acts expressed by social responsible behavior of the people involved in the investigation which are characteristics indicated by Martinez (2006). One of the reasons why qualitative investigation is important in business administration and particularly in the USR studies is because it provides detailed descriptions of real actions in real life contexts, also because of the interpretation while analyzing the meaning of different organizational phenomena which vary depending on the units and actions, the investigation method and the participants. The method used is the triangulation of the self-diagnosis in two stages as combine two or more data source and investigation methods in the study of a particular phenomenon as Denzin (1970) proposes. The investigation methodology used for a USR on the effective university interaction with the society to promote the human talent management, takes into account the essential characteristics of the process proposed by Vallaeys (2008): interdisciplinary and institutional, projects linked to curricular courses, projects on special knowledge usage, of collective action, communication approach, university community achievements and external partners. That is why it was an empirical, descriptive and participative investigation. It was developed in two stages:

First stage: A debate in the board of directors to dialogue about the organization commitment and the introduction of new strategies of social responsibility, the use of questionnaires to different internal agents: students, teachers, and administrative staff about the four aspects of the USR at the Faculty of Administration Sciences. Qualitative methods were used with descriptive statistics technique and correlation for processing. Second stage: Through the I USR Workshop, with the participation of 40 internal actors and university external actors with the following procedure: Debate about the USR: With the purpose of analyzing the concept of USR and its aspects to reach a consensual understanding of the diverse participants due to the diverse interpretations of the philosophical. Ethical-moral, company and educational foundations.

- Results of the self-diagnosis: It consists in the analysis of the students, teachers and administrative staff' perceptions on the four aspects of the USR, through the descriptive results, emphasizing on the strengths and weaknesses and contrast to point out the differences and similarities.
- Team work: work teams integrated by internal and external participants were created and associated to each of the aspects of impact of the USR. Specific aspect information on the perception results was offered. The objective was to generate a participative, committed and purposeful self-diagnosis through the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, identifying critical factors and concretion of proposals for the social responsible practice at the university.
- Decision making group discussion: The proposals pass to the Directors board whose members also participated through the whole process to the orientation and enrichment of the institutional philosophy, its objectives and strategically elaborated actions.

    2.2 Instruments and variables

    For the self-diagnosis of the USR management perception, some adapted instruments where used from the Vallaey, F. et al (2009 a) social responsibility steps manual valid in its creation by a group of experts and in its application in different Latin-American universities. The qualitative questions capture the internal participants' perceptions: teachers, students and administrative staff with positive affirmations and a Likert type of answers with five ascendant options attending the frequency of organizational behavior: never, sometimes, regularly, usually and always.

### 2.2.1 Sample and data procedure at the first stage of the self-diagnosis

The field work at the first stage was designed with the characteristics shown in table 1.

In the data qualitative analysis, descriptive statistics techniques of central tendency were used to characterized the perception of each study's dimension. The randomness of the sample by the Run Tests and the normality of the variables were proved by the Kolmogorov Smirnov contrast statistics. Due to the abnormality of the data, the statisticians for the comparison of qualitative variables where studied by the no independent statistics (no parametric measure for qualitative variables through the different averages in the Kruskal Wallis proof for k independent samples (no parametric measure for qualitative variables ANOVA no parametric). The contrast hypothesis was oriented to the differences in averages: among the perceptions among the different participants, among the students' groups according to the control variables: career, semester and type of course; and among the perceptions of teachers and students in the organizational and educative context. To determine the significance, a value of significance is required with $\alpha = 5\%$, with values of $p > 0.05$ and $p > 0.01$. The formulated hypothesis were:

H1. The students' perception at the FCA about the sustainable campus differ according to the career, semester and type of course.

H2. The students' perceptions at the about the professional education and citizenship differ according to the career, semester and type of course.

H3. Some differences exists on the teachers and students' perceptions at the FCA about the responsible campus.

H4. Some differences exists on the teachers and students' perceptions at the FCA about the professional formation and citizenship.

## *3. Results And Discussion.*

### 3.1 Analysis of results of self-diagnosis of the perception on USR aspects.

In the next chapter, a summary of the investigated university self-diagnosis is shown. It was used as a starting point for a participative investigation action.

**Table 1: Technique Data sheet of field work.**

| Universe | Students, teachers and administrative staff. |
|---|---|
| Context | Facultad de Ciencias de la Administración: (Majors in: Bussiness Administration, Accounting and Human Resources Administration). |
| Sample | Structured on the following size: surveys delivered among students, teachers and administrative staff. |
| Selection and Sample calculation | Aleatory, proportional to the population and intentional. Cochran (1971) sampling technique applied<br>$n0 = (Z2pq)/e2 = (1.96)2(0.5) (0.5) / (0.05)2 = 384$<br>$n = n /(1 +(n0/N) = 316$ |
| Sampling | Level of trust of 95% with a maximum error of 5%. |
| Field study date | September – October 2014 |

Figure 1 Perception of the Organizational Ambit. Impact Area: Responsible Campus
Figure 2. Perception in the Education Ambit. Impact Area: Professional and Citizen Formation
Figure 3. Perception in the Cognitive Ambit. Impact Area: Knowledge Social Management.
Figure 4. Perception of Social Ambit. Impact Area: Social Participation.

**Table 2 Results of the evaluation of the professional and citizen education.**

| Strengths | Weakness |
|---|---|
| Experts in the environment as full-time teachers | Lack of articulation between professionalism and solidarity volunteering |
| Professional practice as a resource to the students' education | Few volunteering projects per year |
| Environmental and ethical subjects in the syllabus | Lack of solidarity volunteering consciousness |
| Extension activities as part of the full-integration of the student's profile | Little participation of external actors in the syllabus design |
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The Figure 1 shoes the organizational ambit at a minimum level (3.93) of social responsible practice (SRP) which impacts the responsible campus, being the students and the administrative staff who shows the lowest valuations. These are similar to the environmental indicators as the weakest. The highlighted indicators are responsible communication and marketing and human rights, gender equality and no discrimination. The administrative staff evaluated with some difficulties the personal and professional development and work environment. There are no evident or meaningful differences in the organizational ambit from students and teachers' perceptions. As it was mentioned before, the environment is among the least recognized indicators by students, teachers and staff, contrary to the university and school's mission and vision with introduced changes in the syllabus and the fact that there is a project on sustainable campus at the university. In addition, Coahuila has some environmental problems related to polluting companies, dessert field and drought. The average values obtained in this ambit reflect the lack of management articulation on the sustainable functions of the universities, as well as the gap between the statement of intents or speech (mission, vision, and institutional values and the daily practice at campus. As Ganga & Navarrete (2012) say, the university is centered more in the internal actions to families and employees and humanitarian donations with social impact. The environment protection and its integration to the syllabus are areas that require, according to authors, a transformation in the educational institutions as committed participants and social responsible in the community. In the educational ambit, it is evident a minimum level (3.71) of social responsible practice (SRP) in the professional and citizen education being the students who gave the lowest valuations.

The articulation among the professionalism and the solidarity volunteering is the least recognized indicator; and the social projects based learning and the integration of social actors in the syllabus redesign are the best evaluated. It is suggested to check other qualitative investigation techniques for further analysis of different perceptions. Although volunteering is a conceptual problem associated to the first definitions of social responsibility (SR) where charity and donations are predominant with a philanthropic focus, as Maldonado de Guevara (2004) says, volunteering influences positively in the university social responsibility (USR) because it generates a social sensitization to the support of the most needy. He argues that the social action itself enables the college students to discover personal values as service, solidarity, generosity, commitment, loyalty, empathy, patience and respect. In the cognitive ambit, it is evident a minimum level (3.6) of social responsible practice, being the diffusion and knowledge transfer to disadvantaged public the least evaluated indicators, and the promotion of investigation of the topic the best evaluated indicator. Both indicators could be understood as a contradiction between the purpose and the real results reached by this research. This data confirm what is claimed in the university reports which show that the investigations and their academic production as well as their impact is one of the weakest with exception of areas not included in this research such as Chemistry and Medicine. In this ambit, it is vital that the universities must act as a generator and transmitter of new knowledge and technology during the internship in the industrial sector, which not only influence the employment generation but also in the solution to social and community problems. So it is necessary that the institutional strategies emphasize the social and community impact and projection of every research projects.

This, together with the social ambit participation, with less value which makes this a strategically objective in the university expressed in the action proposal to strengthen the social knowledge management. About the social participation, a concrete expression of the professional and citizen education, the teachers and students' perceptions show a medium-low level of the socail impact indicators, being the students with the lowest evaluations and the network indicators and the local – national problems the least recognized. The well-recognized is the integration and academic formation to a social projection. The information generated in the self-diagnosis stage allowed us to establish a dialogue among different internal and external participants towards community projects developed by the university where it is evident a good evaluation on the university and the community participation in the design, execution and evaluation of the project and values under the syllabus relationship and the academic and social recognition. As Domínguez Pachón (2009) proposes, this type of social commitment is expressed through the extentionism as the tool to give back to the community part of the benefits received by the minority of students benefited by public finance and tuition fees for free with a cultural bias. In this sense, Gargantini (2014) acknowledges at the universities added to the AUSJAL the importance of agreements formalization through social programs or projects with the different involved participants and the relationship with the disciplinary articulation and that the social projects generate modifications at a social participation level and teaching level. There were not differences in perceptions of students according to their careers, but there were differences in the educational and organizational ambit according to the students' semester and type of which shows a similarity to De la Calle (2010) empiric study where he affirms that it is not possible to make an identification between a greater social responsibility degree and a certain career, because the differences among careers are explained by the personal, humanistic and social characteristics of the groups which belong to each career. In the organizational and educational aspect, the students' perception rejects the hypothesis 1 and 2 attending to the career; but it is accepted with a 55-60% and a 60-70% respectively, variables with significant statistical differences: 0.01 ***0.05 ** per semester and type of course. Significant statistical levels were checked on the teachers and students about the educational aspect in a 60% and in an organizational aspect in a 66% of the variables therefore H3 and H4 are accepted. Because the self-diagnosis refers to the organizational behavior, among the proposal, it is included to do a self-diagnosis and follow-up to the personal behavior of students attending meaning and frequency. Analysis of the results of the self-diagnosis through the participative and committed reflection to the social responsibility (USR). As an illustration, the reader will find table 2 with the results of the Focus Group referred in the educational ambit by its importance in the human talent formation in the current scientific and technological context.

## 5. Conclusions

This investigation is oriented to the study of the social responsibility perspective in the human talent education and management at the universities, based on ethical principles for the students to be exemplar citizens, prepared to be change agents through the generation and innovative application of technological.

Social and environmental knowledge which contribute to the sustainable development of their region – country, through the reflective and participative self-diagnosis. The methodology used in the study reflects reciprocation between the self-diagnosis through surveys and grope reflection. The opportunities are centered to potentiate the possibilities for social oriented projects (community or business) through the academic formation and joint projects at their conception and organization of the professional practice. In a medium term, there is an emphasis in the networks and the amplification of the products and services portfolio on the investigation and education towards having a better understanding and social impact. The realization of the social work at the investigated university has been developed in the fundamental aspect of social service, internship but without any specific structure. In this sense, in this university's social projection study, Domínguez Pachón (2009), prepared based on the data collection on web pages of 35 universities (25 latin-American), identifies that the community is generated through specialized units without a clear interrelationship with the "more academic areas of the university", while others find support in other units of university extension or social work which are linked with the students and teachers' actions that come from outside of the university.. The information generated in the first stage of the self-diagnosis allowed us to establish a dialogue among the diverse internal and external participants for the collective evaluation and improvement actions proposals for short and medium term, which will be incorporated as continuous improvement measures in the social responsible performance of the institution aligned to its strategically objectives. The inadequacies detected in the different ambits of the USR corroborate the necessity of developing this type of self-diagnosis in a systematic manner (every three years) to have accurate information to establish new objectives and plans of action socially responsible integrated to the objectives and plans of the schools and universities. This also contributes to solve the information inadequacies for the follow-up and evaluation of the main indicators which measure the USR.

The action proposal based on reflection and participative debate has three main components, the first to recognize management actions associated to human talent management in students and teachers to potentiate the cognitive areas with the social knowledge management starting with the university substantive function in the knowledge generation and diffusion through the academic formation in the investigation of joint projects and the conception and organization of the professional practice to increase the participation and social impact of the university.

The Social Responsibility (SR) will be strong when we will be able to penetrate the culture of the organizations and participants, mainly internal co-workers, when they are educated and behave as initiative leaders; and the external participants can be conscious, informed and demanding. This is why the educational and informative factor is a key element to be introduced in the elementary and higher education because these students are the future conscious consumers and responsible employees in the organizations. The main input of this investigation is the human talent education and management from the social responsibility perspective. From the beginning using participative methods with different involved and interested groups, based on the evaluation of practice and actions and not in its importance determination, which brings more systematic information for the strategically decision making, the objectives and the social responsible institutional plans. From the methodology to the obtained results, it is confirmed the use and application of the self-diagnosis and its instruments as a guide to evaluate the effectiveness of the University Social Responsibility (USR) management, promoted by Valleys' (2009a), OMERSU and ANUIES as an upholder to the Mexican universities which allows the schools to move to a more efficient human talent education and management. At the same time, this investigation contributes to the methodology, with the introduction as an additional step of the self-diagnosis, the debate and the participative group work for the weakness, strengths and opportunities analysis to propose actions and initiatives with commitment to the organization. This step guarantees the participation and commitment to achieve the substantive processes transformation at the university and to acquire a reflective, participative and committed improvement process in the responsible action of the university and all of the agents. One important consideration to the methodology used lies on verify that the instruments and documentation of the self-diagnosis good practice induce to a fragmented character of the data collection for each of the dimensions. This can be explained because it is the starting stage of the introduction of social responsible actions which integrate the educative, investigation and environment aspects of the substantive functions of the university. To achieve a well integration of all the different ambits in the activities and practice development of the social responsibility (SR) is a future goal of this investigation which will allow us to move from the speech to the action and coherent strategies, coordinated and manageable to improve the Social Responsible Action at the University. The limitations of this exploratory study lie on not having considered in the sample students at a MBA degree who are well-prepared academically.

Professionally and current and future leadership positions to perform. Another limitations is the lack of participation of post-graduates, employers and suppliers in both stages.

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