Ten Fallacies of University Social Responsibility

Las diez falacias de la Responsabilidad Social Universitaria

As dez falácias da responsabilidade social universitária

François Vallaeys* https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2879-1695

Pacífico Business School, Universidad del Pacífico, Lima Perú.

Unión de Responsabilidad Social Universitaria Latinoamericana (URSULA).

Abstract. This article aims at consolidating the theoretical framework of University Social Responsibility (USR) based on the conceptual analysis of the ten more common fallacies regarding the meaning of this university trend, from the Latin American standpoint. This allows to define the conceptual progress reached since the beginning of the 21st century regarding the triple dimension of the ethical principles governing USR, the social transformation objective beneath it, and the cross-sectional management policy that makes it possible, without falling into a general reductionism that takes it for a mere declaratory commitment, a series of good practices, an enterprise ideology, a trivial instrumental management strategy, or an expression of self-indulgence of university authorities. The critical explanations contribute additionally to the debate on the pertinence of USR prizes flourishing at present, in contrast with the legal frameworks that now impose social responsibility on higher education. It can be concluded that the remarkable progress in USR in Latin America demands seriousness in its definition.

Keywords:

university social responsibility, Latin American university, management ethics, sustainable development, educational management

Resumen. El artículo apunta a la consolidación del marco teórico de la Responsabilidad Social Universitaria (RSU) en base al análisis conceptual de las diez falacias más comunes sobre el significado de esta corriente universitaria, desde el contexto latinoamericano. Esto permite precisar los avances conceptuales logrados desde el

Palabras claves:

Responsabilidad social universitaria,

inicio del siglo XXI en cuanto a la triple dimensión de los principios éticos que gobiernan la RSU, la meta de transformación social que la anima, y la política de gestión transversal que la concreta, sin caer en los reduccionismos de todo cuño que la confunden con un mero compromiso declarativo, una serie de buenas prácticas desde la sola extensión, una ideología empresarial, una estrategia de gestión instrumental sin trascendencia, o una autocomplacencia de las autoridades universitarias. Las aclaraciones críticas aportan además al debate sobre la pertinencia de los premios de RSU que florecen actualmente, en contraposición con los marcos jurídicos que empiezan a obligar la educación superior a la responsabilidad social. Se concluye que los notables avances de la RSU en América Latina nos exigen seriedad en su definición.

universidad latinoamericana, ética en la gestión, desarrollo sostenible, gestión educativa.

Resumo. O artigo aponta para a consolidação do referencial teórico da Responsabilidade Social Universitária (RSU) baseado na análise conceitual das dez falácias mais comuns sobre o significado dessa corrente universitária, a partir do contexto latino-americano. Isso permite que os progressos conceituais alcançados desde o início do século XXI, como as três dimensões de princípios éticos que regem a RSU, a meta de transformação social que anima, e a política de gestão transversal que a concreta, sem cair nos reducionismos de todo tipo que a confunde com um mero compromisso declarativo, uma série de boas práticas a partir da mera extensão, uma ideologia empresarial, uma estratégia de gestão instrumental sem transcendência, ou uma auto complacência das autoridades universitárias. Os esclarecimentos críticos também contribuem para o debate sobre a relevância dos prêmios de RSU que estão florescendo atualmente, em contraste com os marcos legais que começam a obrigar o ensino superior à responsabilidade social. Conclui-se que os notáveis avanços do RSU na América Latina nos exigem seriedade em sua definição.

Palavras-chave: responsabilidade social universitária, universidade latino-americana, ética na gestão, desenvolvimento sustentável, gestão educacional.

Introduction: History of USR in Latin America and Issues Related to the Misunderstanding of the Concept

University Social Responsibility (hereinafter, USR) started in Latin America at the beginning of the century, initially thanks to the Chilean university network Universidad Construye País (Jiménez, 2002), and afterwards by the promotion of the Initiative of Ethics, Social Capital,

and Development of BID (Vallaeys & Carrizo, 2006). The Jesuit university network AUSJAL has consolidated a USR management policy since 2009 (AUSJAL, 2009, 2014). Several national and international academic events focused on the subject, and in recent years there has been several university networks and committees related to this new university policy inspiration (ORSALC, OMERSU, URSULA). Nowadays, we can state that USR represents an important opinion, policy and practice trend in the continent's higher education, recognized and valued in other parts of the world (Appe, Rubaii, Líppez-De Castro & Capobianco, 2017; Arnon, Greenberg & Cohen, 2016). Moreover, it is starting to transform the university legislation (Law No. 30220, 2014, Martí-Noguera, Calderón & Fernández-Godenzi, 2018).

Even though other legislations have mentioned the term USR before, the new Peruvian University Law is the first one in Latin America—and perhaps in the world—to consider the obligatory nature of USR for public and private universities in the country, from an impact management approach, and not from a social outreach and extension one. They provide a captivating USR definition:

> Article 124. University Social Responsibility: University Social Responsibility is the ethical and effective management of the impact generated by the university on society due to the following exercise functions: academic, research, extension services, and national development participation in different levels and dimensions. It includes the management of the impact produced due to the relations among the university community members, on the environment and on other public and private organizations that become stakeholders. The university's social responsibility is fundamental for university life, contributing to sustainable development and society's welfare. It concerns the whole university community. (Law No. 30220, 2014).

This legal definition correctly highlights that USR is a management policy cross-sectional to the entire university, just as the quality process. It also adds a continuous improvement of the university social relevance to a quality vision by taking care of the social and environmental impact of all the administrative and academic routines, as well as those connected to the social bonds that the university keeps with its local, national or global territory environment.

This concept maturity did not appear out of nothing, but from a more than 10-year debate on the meaning of university responsibility before society. In this debate, the first basic progress came from UCP, which defined USR no longer as one of the university's substantial functions, but as the implementation of ethical principles in the four university processes:

> We understand as University Social Responsibility the university's ability to promote and practice a group of general and specific values and principles, by means of four key processes: Management, teaching, research and extension. Thus, it accepts its own social responsibility before the own university community and its country (Jiménez, 2002, p. 96).

Some years later, the USR homologue network of AUSJAL adopted this same approach from the three substantial functions towards the four processes, but insisted on the political dimension of involvement in social transformation, which must represent the final goal for these four processes. This network gives the following USR definition:

University's ability and effectiveness to respond to the needs of transformation of its society, by performing its substantial functions: teaching, research, extension and internal management. These functions must be encouraged by trying to promote justice, support and social equity, through the construction of successful responses to deal with the challenges caused by the sustainable human development promotion (AUSJAL, 2009, p. 15).

Meanwhile, the Initiative of Ethics, Social Capital, and Development of BID was emphasizing the significance of a management approach based on a constant critical-constructive analysis of the negative impact generated by the university in the four aspects of its organizational management, professional education, knowledge generation, and social participation:

USR is a management policy for the university ethical quality that aims at aligning its four processes (management, teaching, research and extension) with the university mission, values, and social commitment, by means of the institutional achievement and coherence, transparency, and the participation of the entire university community (authorities, students, professors, administrative staff) in a dialog with the social agents who are interested in the correct university performance and who required it, for the effective transformation of society towards the solution of its exclusion, inequity and sustainability problems (Vallaeys, 2006, p. 5).

However, this brief evolution history of the USR concept in Latin America (LA) does not mean that an agreement has been met, and that higher education policies had been able to aim towards the social responsibility of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). On the contrary, it should be mentioned that, oddly enough, the USR trend has had very little impact on the general orientation of the continent higher education, and that administrative, academic and extension practices remain essentially the same as in the 90s. A very well-known example is that now almost every campus has garbage bins of several colors that encourage students and staff to sort their waste. However, very few institutions could state that they have truly achieved systematic recycling and the subsequent waste valuation, bringing together education, research and social innovation to promote the example of a circular economy from university life. The same inertia (or superficial changes) are evident in other dimensions of socially responsible management: curriculum, types of research conducted and promoted, university governance, etc. It seems that, even if USR is being increasingly accepted and used in discourses, it is not yet able to really penetrate in actions, much less to transform university organizations. This represents at least the view of several

students, as shown by a recent USR perception study of Universidad de Valencia (Martínez-Usarralde, Lloret-Catalá & Mas-Gil, 2017).

It is evident that the integration of a "hard" USR—and not only a "light or diet" one—(Enríquez & Vallaeys, 2017; Vallaeys, 2012) faces several political, ideological, economic and strategic obstacles, just as any movement of social change that pretends to re-define an institution's purpose and re-direct a public policy. However, the greatest of these obstacles is perhaps the one related to the mindset: several university agents—otherwise well-meant and true advocates of a university committed to its social environment and sustainable development—are trapped by conceptual confusion, fallacies and ideology dead-end streets that really complicate the promotion of a truly transforming USR, merely because it was misunderstood in advance.

This paper aims at explaining the main USR-related fallacies that are commonly heard in universities and academic events on this subject, in order to contribute to clarify the true USR meaning. Its purpose is (1) to really consolidate the USR concept, as summarized by the Peruvian University Law; (2) to expect that this conceptualization presents a real transforming efficacy of the higher education institutions, and not only a self-justifying and self-indulgent discursive role from the Latin American authorities, facing a world that urgently needs to turn towards justice and environmental sustainability.

First Fallacy: USR Would Be an Ethical Commitment of the University

This first fallacy is the most widely spread, the most apparently undeniable, and the philosophical base for all the other misconceptions. Its error arises from confusing commitment and responsibility. Philosopher Levinas was able to differentiate and oppose these two concepts, frequently confused in institutional speeches, but that should be set apart. A commitment is a promise, a compliance judgment made by an individual before others, motu proprio, in a free and voluntary manner. Nobody can force me to commit myself, only to obey. On the contrary, a responsibility is an order to answer for something or someone. I may be forced to be responsible, as this order to answer comes before any promise of compliance.

Fulfilling a promise will of course imply subsequent responsibilities (keeping one's commitment), but in a manner that those responsibilities ultimately depend on the individual's previous will. A commitment philosophy prioritizes an individual free of any ties and responsibilities, who supremely decides to commit to some particular matters that will represent various subsequent obligations. The committed individual is independent and sovereign.

On the contrary, the responsible individual is tied and has always been questioned by others and forced to answer. Responsibility comes before any free decision. Levinas states:

"Responsibility for others cannot been based in my commitment, in my choice. My present unlimited responsibility comes before my freedom." (Levinas, 1974, p. 24). If responsibility depended on the individual's freedom, it would always be voluntary, certainly discretionary, and subject to be refused or accepted. As Kant stated, it would be a "hypothetical" imperative, that is, a duty conditioned by a previous wish, a duty under the hypothesis of a certain wish of the individual (Kant, 1788). If that was the case, human beings would only be responsible for their own choices, and responsibility would not be an ethical concept designating a duty, but only a technical, instrumental or strategic concept designating the steps to follow in order to accept a free voluntary purpose that "commits" oneself before others.

It is crucial to consider responsibility with all its potential ethical significance and weight, and not just as a simple matter of consequences: legal consequence (legal responsibility), consequence of the offense caused (criminal responsibility and moral guilt), commitment consequence (responsibility acquired by the accepted choice). Responsibility, from an ethical approach, rather defines our humanity; causes the humanization of the human being. Human beings are humans because they are responsible—since forever—for everyone and everything. They are not beings for themselves but for others: conscious beings who name things, build worlds and societies where they are the "guardian of their brother" (Cain)—whether they love him or not—, and they are not allowed to deny their responsibilities *a priori* without giving up their own humanity.

Applying this philosophical idea to management concepts, if we only talk about "social commitment" it would mean that an organization would not have any *a priori* responsibility towards the society besides the one that it accepts freely in its stated mission. Then, social responsibility would represent a matter of a voluntary nature, beyond any legal or moral obligation, a matter completely dependent on the free choices of the organization's executives. This would seem as no law could force any organization to comply with their social responsibility, and nobody would be able to morally report it for not committing itself to the society. It is evident that this philosophical position that promotes the free social commitment finds several supporters within the corporate liberal environments, and is in conflict with an institutionalized view of social responsibility (Postel, Cazal, Chavy & Sobel, 2011) which, on the contrary, promotes the legal obligatory nature of social responsibility for organizations.

By taking seriously the term "responsibility" within the social responsibility concept—without lowering it to a simply voluntary and discretionary commitment—we should ask ourselves: What are organizations in general, and universities in specific, obligatorily responsible for, in an *a priori* sense, and what are their goals and strategic orientations? To conceive USR as a legal obligation, following the path of the Peruvian University Law, leads to a conceptual revolution facing the voluntary discourse of the philanthropic commitment, which states *responsibility for the impact and not only for the actions*.

By understanding that organizations are responsible for their impact, for all the consequences caused by their institutional routines and choices—such as procurement, provider selection, ecological footprint, strategies of relation with some social agents more than others, etc.—we understand that such organizations are responsible not only for what they do, but also for their involuntary participation in the great trends of their local and global environment. Moreover, we understand that we should certainly demand them to take care of their society, along with the other organizations in co-responsibility networks, and not only of their own internal goals.

Therefore, there is an essential relation among responsibility ethics, definition of social responsibility in terms of responsibility for the impact and monitoring duty, and inter-organizational association to solve justice and sustainability issues of the social group. This philosophical orientation helps to understand—for instance—the logic behind the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Ruggie, 2011), which demands companies to be responsible for monitoring their entire chain of providers to avoid violating human rights in some subcontracting services. On the contrary, there is an essential relation among reduction of the responsibility for just the commitment, definition of social responsibility in terms of good voluntary actions, and the lack of obligation towards organizations beyond the law. This was illustrated, for example, by the European Union's Green Book (2011) that mentioned Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in terms of willingness, and which was replaced by the new EU policy on CSR (European Union, 2011). This turn from commitment towards responsibility is the foundation of the philosophical re-orientation that allows to understand all the remaining fallacies of this paper.

Second Fallacy: USR Would Be the Third University Mission, its Solidarity Social Extension, Next to Education and Research

This second fallacy is the most widely spread at an organizational level and responds to the habit of creating an internal body for each new goal. If the university must participate in social improvement, then a body (direction, department, vice-rectory, etc.) is created to exclusive manage said purpose. Thus, in general Latin American universities conceive themselves in terms of three substantial functions represented by three internal bodies: Education, Research, and Extension. The latter is the function that addresses all actions involving a participating relation with external agents, the actors of society. Therefore, when university students hear about "social responsibility" they initially understand it as "social commitment", and then turn into the "social outreach and extension" body to accept this commitment. They do not think first on the irresponsibility of central administration or the social and environmental incoherence of the education and research areas.

This highly spontaneous manner of understanding and practicing USR is radically mistaken, as it sentences in advance social responsibility to never becoming a dimension *cross-sectional* to all institutional actions. To mistake social responsibility for a university's specific function, next to other functions, is a triple mistake: (1) it exempts the other functions from the responsibility obligation, as there is a body specifically dedicated to this purpose; (2) it exempts central administration from concerning about USR in the daily institutional management, beyond facilitating solidarity extension initiatives; (3) it limits USR to a specific aspect of the institutional job, which involves voluntary social projects with vulnerable communities outside the university. Thus, USR becomes the fact of complying with "good actions" outside the university, besides and independently from the remaining functional daily actions of management, education, research, marketing, resource recruitment, knowledge transference, consulting services, etc., which—depending on other departments and having other executives and goals—would not have to be socially responsible. Each one will perform their functions within the university.

The problem is that social responsibility, being an ethical duty, should not be considered as a function or body. It represents rather the manner of being and function that should be demanded from all the university functions and bodies all the time, and in every detail. Article 124 of the Peruvian University Law clearly states it: USR is the "ethical and efficient management" of all dimensions of the university activity, which concerns the "whole university community." This comprehensive and cross-sectional nature of USR prevents considering it in terms of an independent specific function, and placing it in a particular structural place of the organizational chart. It rather belongs to the university strategic plan as a cross-sectional axis, which must be treated as an integrating process, just as quality demand. A Department of USR may certainly exist, just as the Department of Quality. But the role of such department should not be to carry out good actions beside the other institutional levels, just like a specialized center. Its role must be to promulgate, implement, and control the compliance of policies that guide all the substantial functions and the university's administration.

Therefore, it is important to understand USR in terms of impact management in society and the environment (International Organization for Standardization [ISO] 26000, 2010; Ruggie, 2011). Being cross-sectional and comprehensive, USR finds within the ethics in processes of the complete action chain one of its many demands: not just to carry out good actions for the vulnerable and the environment, but to take care of human rights in the entire provider chain, and taking care of the environment in the entire supply chain. In reality, USR would demand university the development of a "process management" model (Saravia, 2010), by taking care of how things are done, which principles are applied, what are the immediate results and the mid and long-term consequences, and how constant improvement for monitored processes is achieved. This focus on "how" is characteristic of the responsibility ethics, as it demands

to answer for what is done (actions) and before the affected (impacts). In this sense, it is essential to not be content with carrying out good actions, but to carefully analyze the real effects of these actions, their mid and long-term consequences, and their systemic impacts.

The attention to processes, considered as "structured and measured group of activities, designed to produce something specific [...] which supposes a special emphasis on how work is done within an organization, by contrasting it with the special emphasis on product approach" (Davenport, 1996, p. 6) will allow for a cross-sectional and comprehensive perspective of university in its permanent interrelations with its environmental and social environment, instead of losing the panoramic vision on the result details for each school, department, center or office independently. We may think, for example, in the highly important and impacting procurement process, which is never considered when the university social commitment is only visualized within the solidarity extension initiatives.

The best way of understanding this cross-sectional and procedural paradigm is to compare USR to quality management. Nobody would pretend that quality only concerns the Department of Quality; instead, it is considered as a qualitative manner of complying with all institutional activities. USR will greatly benefit from being considered in this same manner, allowing each university agent to ask the following essential question: "What are the social and environmental impact caused by my activities within the university group?" Caring for university routine processes is the best way to evolve from an approach of social commitment outside the daily academic and administrative activities (the good actions of social outreach) to an approach of accepting responsibility for all the potential impacts of academic and administrative activities on the society and environment. Truly measuring what is done and trying to improve it is part of that responsible honesty that the university community owes to its society and students. Quality with and thanks to social relevance are two of the USR foundations.

Third Fallacy: USR Would Be a Series of Internal and External Good Practices

This third misconception is deduced from the first two analyzed fallacies. By mistaking social responsibility for just the simple commitment to carry out social assistance actions by the extension and social outreach department, all the focus is on good actions, generous initiatives, well-meant projects, and solidarity programs. This is the activist fallacy of USR, which leads to several undesirable consequences:

First, it focuses on a cumulative view of responsibility: more good actions, more responsibility. The annual reports list the number of launched projects, the number of involved students, and the total number of people who received the benefits and assistance. If we carry out good actions, we are good and, certainly, "socially responsible."

Second, institutional virtue becomes histrionic; it enjoys performing under the spotlight, but not analyzing what happens behind the scenes. By emphasizing the importance of solidarity service and its positive impacts, the university involvement in negative impact is safeguarded. Thus, the annual report will list all the campaigns launched in favor of the environment, but it will not examine the university's ecological footprint: its impacts related to transportation, water, energy, procurement, waste, etc. Likewise, this report will not mention the negative environmental impact caused by its international academic events, which transport hundreds of people from several countries. Preferential attention to actions blinds us regarding our impacts, and generates a dangerous situation of lack of self-criticism—an unbecoming situation for an institution willing to dedicate itself to scientific knowledge and comprehensive education, which should claim lucidity as one of its essential values.

Finally, reducing USR to just some social initiatives and projects causes the negative consequence of conceiving social commitment as a series of expenses of time, money and resources used in these actions, without achieving the systematic approach, generated by impact management and which permits the creation of beneficial return opportunities towards the university. On the contrary, impact management—as it focuses on processes— enables us to benefit from the USR cross-sectional policy: to entrust Engineering students with the calculation of the campus' ecological footprint allows to comply with the comprehensive and specialized education, measuring the environmental results, raising awareness within the internal community, and reducing consumption. By educating students in their own professional skills, the university reduces costs and practices coherence between its stated mission and its pedagogical and administrative practices. Its investments in responsible provider selection, building remodeling, promotion of organic food, etc., become just that: investments—and no longer expenses—as they fulfill the university's main educational and pedagogical purpose.

An impact approach would immediately contribute with much more efficacy in the sustainable transformation of the economic, social and environmental surroundings, than the individual projects launched for the sake of kindness. We just need to think of the implications for the farming market if millions of students and employees chose healthy organic food every day at campus: thousands of organic producers supported by transferring agro-ecological knowledge and technologies by their own university customers. Changing from a solidarity action vision to a responsible impact one could transform universities on a real development level. Meanwhile, as nobody thinks about the management impacts, universities keep enriching international soda and fast-food companies. Moreover, university students regret the country's difficult situation, without realizing that they are part and financial supporters of it.

Based on these three fundamental fallacies, several others related to USR have developed, depending on the political trend of the different university agents: leftists suspect that USR

belongs to the right-wing; rightists want to reduce it to a simple institutional marketing game. We will review first the three left-wing fallacies, and then we will move to the right-wing ones.

Fourth Fallacy: USR Would Represent the Neoliberal Corporate Ideology Invading the University

This prejudice is widely spread over left-wing academic environments, and it is mainly expressed from public universities. This suspicion originates in the fact that the "social responsibility" subject was first born in the corporate environment (Bowen, 1953) and, during the last decades of the 20th Century has represented mainly a group of corporate philanthropic voluntary practices, highly below the demands of the relation between market economy and sustainable development and human rights (Vallaeys, 2013; Vogel, 2008). This has enabled critics to talk about fairwashing and greenwashing, due to initiatives more oriented towards the promotion of a good corporate reputation than towards the systematic change to a restorative economy (Hawken, 1993).

It is expected that this critic of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was going to affect USR, and it is important to point out that reducing social responsibility university policies to just philanthropic assistance—more focused on marketing than on solidarity—is a Damocles sword hanging over higher education institutions. However, it is shameful to see how some academic people—otherwise keen to cross-section a true social commitment of the Latin American university—dismiss USR without further analysis, just because its name reminds them of CSR and they state that the university is not a corporation (Tommasino & Cano, 2016).

Nevertheless, it is evident that a certain European conception of USR inclines it towards serving mainly economic interests for adapting higher education to the job market demands (Casillas et al., 2013; González, Fontaneda, Camino & Revilla, 2015; Martí-Noguera et al., 2018). From this subjugation risk for the university policy, it is perfectly reasonable to be concerned about a neoliberal turn in higher education (Calderón, Pedro & Vargas, 2011). However, it is also fair to acknowledge that USR in Latin America has not been a victim of this ideology; on the contrary, it has reinforced the university's solidarity social dimension. Several reasons should influence us to reject in advance the idea of a Latin American USR policy, and rather promote a USR that really is a proper model and socially relevant, to conceive the committed Latin America university:

First, SR has stopped being of a corporate and philanthropic nature. Since the issuance of the Guidance on Social Responsibility-ISO 26000—negotiated among several countries during five years—social responsibility not only concern corporations, but all the organizations, being public or private, for-profit or non-profit (International Organization for Standardization [ISO] 26000, 2010). By defining organizational social responsibility in terms of responsibility for

impacts, the new social responsibility vision definitely distances itself from mere philanthropy, and oblige organizations to monitor, reduce and eliminate their negative impacts (Capron, 2011; Ruggie, 2011). Nowadays, SR is directed towards institutionalization and accepts this motto: "Do not tell me what you do with the benefits, but how you obtain them" (Gendron & Girard, 2013).

In second place, USR understood as impact management does allow to avoid fairwashing, to fight against the commercialization of higher education (Vallaeys, 2014). The critical perception of the negative impacts generated by an incorrect academic and administrative management demonstrates the contradictions of an elitist university, ruled by international ranking criteria, and it blinds us to the social and environmental problems of the current industrial development. It is rather the confusion of social commitment from the mere extension and isolated good actions that risks sending USR into a mere marketing discourse without any real impact, neither in academy nor in university management.

Third, USR as impact management follows a political ecology model; that is, a political orientation scientifically informed from the scientific analysis and global trends of the market economy and capitalism, as generators of systematic negative external aspects that make economic growth an agent of unsustainability, but not of real development. From Carson, Darling & Darling (*Silent Spring*, 1962) to Pauli (*The Blue Economy. 10 Years, 100 Innovations, 100 Million Jobs*, 2010), including Illich (*La convivialité*, 1973), the Brundtland report (*Informe de la Comisión Mundial sobre el Medio Ambiente y el Desarrollo*, 1987), Hawken (*The Ecology of Commerce*, 1993) , and Hawken, Lovins & Lovins (*Natural Capitalism*, 1999), there is a solid tradition of critic to the current "development" model as self-destructive, emphasizing the humanity collective responsibility for getting through the industrial and financial capitalism based on the maximization of financial revenues and the outsourcing of costs, and that systematically relates the dead-end streets of the current economy with outdated paradigms of scientific, economic and management thinking. To this end, it is essential to demand being aware of epistemic impacts from a USR applied philosophy, which may generate new complex epistemological paradigms, such as biomimetics (blue economy) or permaculture (green economy).

Finally, USR would indeed represent a neoliberal invasion of the university world if it was reduced to just an administrative management matter based on accounting of some good social and environmental indicators, which confused means with ends and it was not supported by a permanent reflection on the social role of higher education by the university community and science in the unsustainability era. Therefore, it is crucial to not impoverish the USR concept with a strictly managerial-operational vision: practicing USR does not mean preparing an annual sustainability report by following the Global Reporting Initiative indicators. We will explain this on the ninth fallacy.

Fifth Fallacy: USR Would Always Have Been in the Public University's DNA, Which Would Not Need to Perform Any Different or Additional Actions

This fallacy is widely spread in the Latin American Public University. Its supporters think that USR applies only for private universities, which may have to prove their social usefulness and relevance, but not for public universities, which would be a priori socially responsible. This belief is based on the following argument: as the public university is directed to the education of all young people with no elitist economic barriers, it is egalitarian—and, thus, socially responsible—by nature. Only the private university—always suspicious of being a for-profit corporation and practicing socio-economic discrimination—should look after its social responsibility.

Here, the mistake resides in confusing the university's equitable and public purposes with the social relevance of its operation. As the university holds the superior purpose of education—which represents by itself a public asset—it would be a respectable institution by itself. Once again, the deep reason behind this confusion is blindness towards the institutional negative impacts. By considering only the "superior" purposes of the institution, but not the hidden negative impact of the daily practices, one deludes oneself regarding the real social relevance of university. Therefore, it is crucial to perform a demanding USR self-assessment (Vallaeys, De la Cruz & Sasia, 2009), in order to avoid being mistaken by this easy self-contentment.

In reality, both public and private universities present several negative impacts, unperceived in their environmental and labor organizational management, education and research academic management, and social involvement management. By performing a self-assessment of the internal agent perception, several of the institutional problems may appear and invite to a constructive collective reflection (Enríquez & Vallaeys, 2017).

This fallacy regarding the public university's *a priori* kindness hides a sign of fear of change, a strategy to assure its social legitimacy, as to avoid questioning and starting the difficult road of self-criticism. Once again, confusing responsibility for just commitment, and limiting such commitment to good practices guided by the solidarity extension body, are the three fallacies that help to avoid institutional self-reflection, and the subsequent difficult changes in administrative and academic routines.

Sixth Fallacy: USR Would Mainly Mean Inclusion and Retention of Impoverished and Marginalized Students

This fallacy is deeply related to the previous one, as it is more commonly found in the public university environment. It focuses its attention to the problem of inequality in higher education access, with no critique to the contents and orientations of that higher education itself. Thus, institutions that are able to fight inequality in access, retention and graduation of the most impoverished and marginalized young people would be successfully complying with its USR, and

would not have to look any further for possible negative impacts caused by its internal actions.

It is evident that, in a highly unequal continent as Latin America, the problem of equality in higher education access, the retention and graduation of students from marginalized social environments, the defense of professional education and sciences as public assets, and the human rights within the framework of a non-excluding and non-elitist knowledge society are highly important topics that form the social justice ethical axis that must guide all university policies (Aponte-Hernández, 2008). However, we should not confuse this social and political responsibility of public decision-makers from the State with the social responsibility of university agents from institutions and academic entities.

Organizational management of an egalitarian public asset, such as education, can be conducted in a mistaken and corrupted manner, promoting discrimination and exclusion. Behind this reduction of social problems to just the inequality subject, we could once again find the hidden strategy of becoming blind to the daily negative academic and administrative impacts of the university institution, and the evasive epistemic budgets. For instance, a public university could present a policy of inclusion for culturally marginalized sectors, such as native communities—, and simultaneously hold a positivist scientific perspective of the curriculum, in such a way that only western logic has voice, vote and respect within each academic program. This scenario could be, perhaps, accepted for some disciplines, but for others (medicine, languages, agriculture, etc.) represents a discriminatory denial that deceitfully guides the university's education in humanities and science towards discrediting non-modern knowledge.

USR, as responsibility for the social and environmental impacts generated by university practice, invites us to also reflect on the hidden epistemic impacts caused by the knowledge that is recognized and transferred from higher education institutions, and that may be a hidden source of segregation, ethnocide and injustice (Jaulin, 1976). In any case, admission, retention and graduation of students from marginalized social environments does not *a priori* exempt the university community from a deep and critical self-reflection on the presuppositions of its epistemic legitimation.

After these three last fallacies, originated in the left-wing ideological environments, fallacies regarding USR that are generated in the right-wing ideological environments should be analyzed.

Seventh Fallacy: USR Would Be Summarized in Selflessness Actions for the Most Impoverished People

It was evident that USR was going to suffer the same condition as CSR: being confused with philanthropy. In the evolution of the social responsibility concept in organizations, it must be understood that the movement started in the United States within a liberal corporate

environment as a voluntary selfless return to society from a part of the benefits received by the corporate leader, outside the core business of the company (Bowen, 1953). Gradually, this North American voluntary personal ethical conception (WASP Culture: White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant) has been evolving towards the integration of social responsibility within the main operations of the corporation; this evolution was captured in the main tools of socially responsible management (SA8000, ISO 26000, SGE 21, United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights). For this reason, despite the rationalization progress, the CSR is still very tied to philanthropy, and it is frequently confused with it, especially in North and South America, where the philanthropic culture—inherited from the 20th Century paternalism—still prevails (Capron, 2011).

Trying to reduce university social responsibility to merely selfless actions for the marginalized is to try to reduce the institution's impact management problems to the institution's kindness to fellow man. Once again, this avoids difficult questions about our negative impacts and allows us to focus outside the institution, towards the people in greatest need. It also raises the double issue of attaching USR to student voluntary work, and facilitates a paternalistic, clientelist and conservative perspective of social problems in terms of assistance. Thus, by pretending to work in favor of social causes, the university becomes rather immune to social responsibility, as this is perceived only as voluntary projects, and not as an obligation subject to be established by law. Welfare oriented kindness that is subject to the institution's will rarely will be understood from a citizen's right, justice, and social policy perspective (García & Spampinato, 2003). It will be rather perceived as an "ethical commitment", that is, personal free will for the selfless individuals, which the institution may promote, but not demand.

If social responsibility is a matter of performing good actions for the people in need, nobody can force or manage it. It would only be a matter of promoting individually voluntary commitment. This kind of USR policy is just a permanent exhortation for the internal public to be kind, which will be expressed through workshops, fairs, events, trips, promotional activities, etc., all aimed at promoting social awareness among students and staff. However, social responsibility is not a matter of voluntary selflessness. We must remember the previously mentioned CSR motto: "Do not tell me what you do with the benefits, but how you obtain them" (Gendron & Girard, 2015). Voluntary philanthropic actions do not exempt institutions from a critical assessment on the processes it promotes, the results it accomplishes, and the social and environmental impacts that such processes and results represent. From this impact approach, USR is not a matter of the heart, but of management.

It should be mentioned that to set apart social responsibility and philanthropy, some "de-moralization" of social responsibility is required (Benseddik, 2006), so that it could be subject to the law (public policies) and organizational management (strategic and long-

time sustainable planning). This does not mean that the promotion of ethics and solidarity is not a key element, but the institution is responsible for the impacts generated by its core business, independently of its philanthropic actions. Moreover, the only way of knowing and acknowledging these impacts is through a management and organizational learning system that implies: self-diagnosis, policies of change implementation, mitigation, risk monitoring, continuous improvement, feedback, assessment, training, communication, etc. (Vallaeys et al., 2009). From a management approach, we do not try to fill people's hearts with selflessness, but to face them with their responsibilities by showing the impact of their daily activities on society and the environment, trying to keep a methodology scientifically oriented towards the disclosure and measurement of organizational impacts.

The most impoverished people will, ultimately, benefit much more from a university that is aware of its own impacts, than from a philanthropic university that ignores them. Thus, they will be able to benefit from the new social bonds between the institution and them, from procurement administration, professional education management (learning based on social projects) and knowledge (research on and with community). This initiative will try to reduce the negative impacts caused by an administration blind to its chain of providers, and promote positive impacts generated by an academic education linked to the solution of social problems. Once social transformation is assimilated into the heart of the university task, it is no longer a voluntary work, but a system of obligations connected to quality and continuous improvement. In summary, not accepting impoverished people assistance as the USR definition does not mean to put aside priority assistance to poverty and marginalization issues; it means not reducing social responsibility to just assistance, and not mistaking assistance for donations, but rather to integrate it into administrative and academic daily management.

Eighth Fallacy: USR Would Be an "Ethical-Social" Topic to Add to the Curriculum

A reductionist and separating vision of social problems, induced by the educational system, also mistakenly considers social responsibility as an additional subject for education programs, next to the other academic program's topics, just as some comprehensive education course to acquire solidarity and values for the development of "soft skills." Based on its recent popularity in the business world and demand in the international ethical frameworks, social responsibility would deserve to be included in the graduate courses of the School of Business. And even in undergraduate education, social responsibility would represent a way of renewing the ethics or community social outreach courses. We are social responsible because we talk about and teach social responsibility.

Once again, the desire of providing a well-defined place to social responsibility, beside the remaining institutional activities, prevents its full development as a duty cross-sectional to the entire institution and, in this case, to all offered courses, which should systematically analyze their own potential negative impacts. It is certainly difficult to imagine the entire faculty being aware of the responsibilities for the impacts linked to their classes, and the faculty training task is a long-term effort. Therefore, it is bad idea to introduce social responsibility in the curriculum, as it may risk becoming quickly invisible. This is one of the arguments used by Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán for introducing the Social Responsibility course at the beginning of all its Licentiate academic programs (Pérez Alayón & Vallaeys, 2016). However, said thematic introduction must not spare us the effort of cross-sectionally integrating social responsibility in every subject taught in university. "What are the social and environmental impacts of the subjects I teach?" must be a mandatory question for the entire faculty, when designing their subject, choosing their theoretical framework, and evaluating tasks proposed to students. In this sense, it should be noted that there are scientific and disciplinary postures that go against the progress of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and others that rather facilitate them. Not every theoretical framework is ethically neutral; or rather, none of them is. It should be also noted the existence of teaching methodologies that promote positive impacts on students, society and environment, such as service learning or learning based on social projects (Martínez, 2010).

Another issue raised by an overly thematic and academic USR approach is its tendency to focus mainly in student education, instead of in the other aspects of university activities— such as research, organizational management, governance, social involvement and university extension—, which may cause negative social impacts. By focusing the discourse and attention on the socially responsible alumni, one risks forgetting about all the internal and external problems that unintentionally involve the university, and which ultimately represent the study context for the education of students under a "hidden curriculum" appearance (Apple, 1986). USR is not exactly a student matter; it concerns the entire university community, and even the entire society.

Ninth Fallacy: USR Would Mean Compliance with the University's Sustainability Report

This fallacy—in contrast to the previous one that originated in an overly academic and pedagogical vision—responds to a rigorously management and administrative USR conception. The scenario of reducing USR to an instrumental logic may appear when the task of implementing USR is assigned to the administrative staff, who are trained in the application of the CSR management tools. Yearly compliance with the presentation of a university's sustainable report

would be attained, by following a Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) model, the Guidance on Social Responsibility-ISO 26000, or an ad hoc model designed by the university itself.

Spanish universities tend to insist on the importance of a sustainability report that collects institutional actions around economic, social, and environmental initiatives beneficial to sustainable development (González et al., 2015; Martí & Martí-Vilar, 2013). Moving away from the Latin American vision of a university committed to community and projecting towards it in a solidarity sense, the Spanish USR vision brings it closer to the auditing and accountability process of the institution sustainability in the three performance aspects: economic, social, and environmental (Ruiz-Corbella & Bautista-Cerro, 2016).

Actually, USR would need to bring these two concepts together: solidarity in community and measuring with accountability of the institutional performance. However, if we mention the fallacy of the sustainability report trend is because, in practice, these reports are ruled by an approach overly based on the organizational mindset of the corporate pattern. For this purpose, the CSR annual report serves, ideally, to gradually integrate social and environmental dimensions to the core business, and—in the worst-case scenario—only for marketing purposes: to obtain good reputation through a self-proclamation of good behavior.

Copying the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) model is not a good sign, if we consider that it does not offer a report format specifically conceived for universities, and that it focuses on the triple bottom line: economic, social, and environmental aspects as a series of achievement to be attained by the organization so that its performance is considered as "good" (Gaete Quezada, 2011). This directs reflection, practice and perseverance towards topics that are easily measurable and observable in a check list divided into the three big areas of organizational performance: presence of a code of conduct, gender equality in executive positions, channel of dialog with clients, facility accessibility for disabled people, waste sorting, consumption and transportation, responsible marketing, human rights, etc. The "Market for Virtue" (Vogel, 2006), that is, the agencies specialized in helping corporations to formulate, implement, and communicate their CSR, already have an entire series of speeches, rituals, and management tools that motivate an exclusive approach on these items. However, they are far away from the crucial aspects for universities: the content and methodology of professional and humanistic education provided to students, and the selectivity of knowledge built from the research laboratories.

If the GRI model is not adjusted to universities, adopting it for presenting reports on higher education social and environmental performance will cause an inverse effect than expected. The hidden negative impact of the practice of USR sustainability report resides in the fact of exclusively focusing on some outstanding aspects of the institution's socially responsible performance—those that can be demonstrated, continuously measured, and compared—and dismissing other topics and practices that do not present this characteristic of

easily being subject to management regulation (Alphandéry, Djama, Fortier & Fouilleux, 2012). If this negative impact is already present in the CSR guidelines, it is even worse for universities that expect to be measured by applying the same imported tools to their institutional reality, without caring to complement them with indicators specifically conceived for higher education. The result is a university self-diagnosis produced with considerable effort, but that does not observe the key dimensions of academic impacts. This diagnosis is exclusively conducted by administrative staff, and it does not include the student and faculty opinion from the pedagogical relation reality, but only as "clients and collaborators" who are satisfied or not. However, students are not "clients" of the university, and the transmission of knowledge is not its "product." Using this inflow and outflow terminology goes against the reality of an academic entity, where people coexist for mutual education and searching the truth.

This does not imply that the report culture is not essential for social responsibility. We find it highly important that every university complies with its USR by a self-diagnosis of its social and environmental impacts measured and assessed by indicators generated from the four aspects of management, education, cognition, and social involvement (AUSJAL, 2014; Vallayes et al., 2009). Nevertheless, those indicators should be carefully chosen so that they are able to measure the important aspects, and make the university community reflect on the continuous improvement of its social function. So far, neither GRI, PRME, or ISO 26000 have been able to highlight the importance, for instance, of not only providing Economics students with manuals based exclusively on the Chicago School or Milton Friedman, but also on the economy of common goods of Elinor Ostrom, or the ecological economy of Georgescu-Roegen. Such bibliographic selection and epistemic preference are much more important and striking for the future sustainable development than the "ecological campaigns for a green campus," which photos are easily included in the university sustainability reports.

Tenth Fallacy: USR Would Represent an Award Obtained by the University for Complying with a Standardized Group of Good Practices

As the last fallacy, it is urgent to report the new worrying tendency in the Latin American university world: a trend of providing awards to socially responsible universities, copied from the well-established CSR's award trend. From the Mexican Center for Philanthropy (Cemefi) who started awarding certificates to "socially responsible corporations" to universities and university foundations—including a student award called "Caracol de Plata" and the National Assembly of Schools of Accounting and Administration (ANFECA), which has been awarding Mexican higher education institutions with the USR emblem for several years—there is the intention of promoting this habit in the academic world.

If we reasonably consider the USR concept, it is impossible for a university to be awarded for being "socially responsible", as this would mean that the institution has diagnosed,

monitored, and eliminated all of its negative impacts, in its internal management, the academic education that it provides, the knowledge that it builds, and its social involvement. And, of course, this impossibility also applies to corporations and any type of organization. However, even if we may understand that a for-profit company gets tempted by this marketing strategy before its clients, it is difficult to conceive that a higher education institution—devoted to the search for truth and scientific education—could take part in such communication and marketing initiatives before its own internal community. How to legitimize the incorrect use of the term "responsible" before ethics professors of the own university and students? It is even more difficult if we consider that this type of award facilitates university compliance with USR. Since when would a university need a medal as an incentive for complying with its duty before society and the environment? And what would be the message of socially responsible management when staff and students from the awarded university notice inconsistencies in some of their *alma mater*'s organizational practice?

It is, then, a severe mistake to reduce USR to just a matter of institutional marketing and good reputation management, using ethics and solidarity as tools to obtain fame and prestige for the institution and its on-duty authorities. This fallacy is linked to the simplification of social responsibility, reduced to "good practices" (3rd fallacy) measurable by a standardized report (9th fallacy). To fight this temptation, we should remember the warning made by Gaete Quezada (2011):

> "...universities may succumb to the temptation of overly simplifying the expression of their socially responsible behavior, developing a rather instrumental perspective of it, due to its strong external financial dependence. However, this behavior would not be based on an existing USR institutional culture, and it would be mainly supported by activities related to marketing or accountability for an external certification, repeating the common mistake made by countless corporations in relation to the CSR aspect (p 129).

If Latin American universities ultimately succumb to this temptation, it would be necessary to consider the fourth fallacy (USR as an invasion of the university by the neoliberal corporate ideology) as a mistake, and to rather report the USR movement as a suspicious trend of university's corporate reputation management, through fairwashing actions. Fortunately, we are not facing such a situation yet, and the vast majority of USR-related efforts made by university agents are well-oriented in Latin American. Therefore, our innovations are recognized and valued abroad (Appe et al., 2017), and the legal framework starts to consider our USR as a model for higher education organization (Peruvian University Law). Nevertheless, we may remain critical and attentive, so that the USR movement is not misrepresented, altering it to a fairwashing strategy.

CONCLUSION

It should be mentioned that by reporting the fallacies in this journal, we are not condemning the institutional actions they involve. The fallacy resides in confusing and reducing USR to just the mentioned practice. However, it is evident that (1) the university needs a sound ethical commitment towards sustainable human development; (2) the third university mission is essential to its relevance; (3) good practices should be promoted from the institution's heart; (6) it is essential to include and retain impoverished and marginalized students; (7) solidarity campaigns are necessary, especially for emergencies and disasters; (8) ethics and social responsibility subjects are highly useful for student comprehensive education; and (9) complying with the sustainability report really helps the self-assessment and progress of the institution. In our opinion, the only aspects that should be completely dismissed are (4) treating the university as a corporation aiming at maximizing its profit; (5) thinking that we are already a socially responsible university community, and that we do not have anything to change in our daily activities; (10) giving social responsibility awards to universities, this fallacy the most dangerous vice to avoid at this time, as it attacks the own legitimacy of the entire USR Latin American movement.

The key for avoiding all these fallacies is the correct definition and practice of USR: the university's responsibility for its impacts in all the management, educational, cognitive, and social involvement aspects, aimed at the sustainable development of society, and by cross-sectionally addressing the entire university community to implement policies and programs that transform the institution from a permanent, sensible self-diagnosis of its achievements and failures, applying coherence, transparency, and an innovation spirit.

A collaborative reflection on the hidden epistemic impacts of mental paradigms—which design university administrative and academic management—helps us in this road to USR. Such reflection must be facilitated by well-designed performance indicators, which help to concretize and make the USR concept operational without reducing and categorizing it. The ultimate goal of the university socially responsible management system is to overcome the fear of change, in order to re-define the university's social role in the era of global technoscience. If today's society increasingly depends on scientific knowledge to generate value and solve problems, university must become an agora where the different social actors can share valuable knowledge, learn from each other, and come to an agreement based on a diagnosis that is scientifically verified, in order to work together for taking care of the common good and sustainable development. This new social role will permit knowledge democratization, fighting against inequality, and exclusion in the knowledge economy, and achieving a smarter and more resilient society.

On the contrary, USR's greatest risk is to conceive it as a means to adapt university to the corporate world and the market needs as it is, and not as it should be (González et al., 2015).

Behind the adaptation ideology lies higher education subjugation to the privatization of socially profitable knowledge, and its instrumental reduction to the employability of licentiate young people. The university should not be perceived as a job agency. Against this tendency, we must remember USR's ethical purpose, linked to justice, equity and sustainability. Ethical principles should guide the socially responsible management policy and the purpose of involvement in social transformation (AUSJAL, 2014). Actually, the university's core business is knowledge legitimacy; to this end, it awards licenses to practice certain branches of knowledge to the professionals duly recognized to deserve it. Knowledge legitimacy cannot be applied outside the complete autonomy and transparency of the university agora, facing all the political, economic and ideological powers.

Gaete Quezada (2011) identifies three USR tendencies: managerial, transformational and regulatory. We should think that USR would need, more than to differentiate among these tendencies, to unite them in order to consolidate its theoretical framework, as it represents a university model based on ethical values, whose purpose is social transformation, and which is consolidated in a cross-sectional management policy. If one of these three foundations is missing, USR becomes pointless, indulgent or inefficient, and we enter the world of fallacies.

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