

UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION

Universities operate in a highly competitive, dynamic, and complex environment, and face numerous challenges imposed by new demands of society. One of these challenges is their responsibility to create and manage knowledge, given that they must foster the generation of new knowledge (technological, humanistic or social) through scientific research.

This social role of universities stems from the need to transmit accumulated knowledge and provide solutions to emerging problems in each historical moment. Scientific research has enabled society to progress and modify prevailing conditions, thus improving people's quality of life and attaining higher levels of human development.

Therefore, the importance of universities as engines of economic competitiveness in the global economy is growing. Their contribution to forming human capital and developing science and technology is essential for the development of the country. It is crucial to create know-how that reduces inequality, stimulates socioeconomic growth, improves production processes and enables sustainable development.

In this context, university governance has become a crucial factor for managing public policy and strategic planning in a dynamic environment. It is essential to have modern and flexible universities, with mechanisms that enable them to provide the human capital that is necessary for societal development.

In a world in which knowledge becomes obsolete with increasing rapidity, universities must get it right in creating and transmitting knowledge that is up to date, relevant, dynamic, contextual, prospective and transdisciplinary. The wealth or poverty of nations depends significantly on the research carried out by their universities.

This is relevant because universities are complex and dynamic organizations: open systems that are homeostatic, synergistic and recursive, composed of numerous interrelated elements. They differ from traditional organizations because it is difficult to standardize in that their core activities, namely teaching, research, and societal engagement. Moreover, their academic units such as faculties, departments, institutes, schools and centres, require high levels of professionalism, and hence operate with high degrees of autonomy due to the high qualification of their staff, which makes them difficult to direct and manage.

Given the commitment of universities to creating and managing knowledge, university governance becomes particularly relevant, involving the organization and structure of universities from a management perspective. University governance makes it easier to make strategic decisions that are pertinent and sustainable, thus ensuring the continuity of the educational process. It is based on the premise that education must focus on the progressive development of students' knowledge and skills, providing them with a professional formation that responds and adapts to the needs of the social environment and workplace. Furthermore, universities encourage a safe and interactive environment for students, academics and other members of the institution.

Therefore, in the knowledge society, research is the fundamental basis for the academic and formative development of universities. Through science, technology and innovation, the profound systemic changes necessary to address social problems can be catalysed. A university that has a clear focus on research, also has high quality teaching, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, due to its capacity to generate knowledge that is at the frontier and transmit it to society in general.

As centres of research and knowledge generation, universities contribute to their local, national, regional and international environment. They have the obligation to offer future generations an education that is integral, inclusive and has social significance. In many places, universities that engage in research are key agents in supporting and generating knowledge, thereby creating positive technological and social externalities. Engaging in research, innovation and the production of knowledge at the frontier, is a fundamental responsibility of universities and a means for the full development of countries.

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