

A Critique on the Concept of Social Accountability in Higher Education

René Pedroza Flores¹, Guadalupe Villalobos Monroy² & Ana María Reyes Fabela¹

¹ Instituto de Estudios Sobre la Universidad, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEMex), México

² Facultad de Ciencias de la Conducta, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEMex), México

Correspondance: René Pedroza Flores, Instituto de Estudios Sobre la Universidad, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEMex). Paseo Tollocan N° 1402 Poniente, Ciudad Universitaria Puertas “F1 y F2”, C.P. 50110, Toluca, México. Tel: 52-722-214-5351. E-mail: renebufi@yahoo.com.mx

Received: August 10, 2014

Accepted: August 28, 2015

Online Published: September 29, 2015

doi:10.5539/jel.v4n4p1

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v4n4p1>

Abstract

This paper attempts to present a critique of the concept and meaning of the term social accountability at university level from a critical point of view. The main objective is to analyze and re-build the term accountability in order to contextualize it for public universities. First, we present the importance of the idea of accountability in universities as a way of being and acting. Then, a comprehensive literature review is presented referring to the term University Social Responsibility (USR, hereafter) using the economic thinking of Milton Friedman and Edward Freeman. Subsequently, we look at the meaning of USR within the framework of higher education. Finally, we conclude that it is necessary to rethink the idea of university accountability as opposed to the current policy of USR affecting the policies implemented for public universities.

Keywords: accountability, educational policy, higher education, social order, social responsibility

1. Introduction

Public universities (Note 1) have suffered reforms which are translated into program cuts which have had a negative impact on the management of economic resources. In recent years, public universities have experienced a restrictive and limited economic trend based on parameters of efficiency, productivity and quality. In Latin America, the reforms of the last 10 years have been promoting the gradual privatization of higher education (the opening of the academic market), the containment of state financing (cuts and meritocratic controls to the state budget), the *de-regulation* of academic work (lack of work protection and payment based on performance aspects) as well as the commercialization of academic work.

One aspect that has stood out over the last few decades is the switch of university management processes. In the last ten years, we have changed from the term accountability to Social Responsibility (SR). This has also represented a change in the discourse, but not in the rationale with which public universities are administered and managed. With the era of accountability, the emphasis on productivity and quality as major elements followed by the term *social responsibility* for quality and ethics. In both cases, indicators of accountability are present, associated to the distribution of resources through ISO (*International Standard Organization*) norms. This policy intends to respond to international standards in order to facilitate commerce, exchange of information and transfer of higher education.

In this context, we consider it is important to *re-evaluate* the concept of social responsibility for universities. Applying business-like standards to university activities reduces them to those of a commercial establishment or organization. Our main thesis is that universities need to restructure the principle of accountability within the philosophy of universities and not integrate it without reflecting upon the consequences.

Accountability is a broad-based topic to be addressed. For this reason, in the following pages we only present focal points related to the concept such as its history and fundamentals. All this information will be analyzed from the theoretical framework developed by Milton Friedman and Edward Freeman. We will leave the debate open, pointing that we should be talking about university social responsibility and not accountability as understood within the business context. The difference between accountability and university social responsibility represents a major question to be discussed because it addresses the essence of public universities. The starting point for this

discussion attempts to answer the following question: why do we want universities to be institutions of knowledge and culture instead of purely commercial establishments?

2. General Background

While reviewing the text *University Social Accountability*, which contains the bills from the Pax Romana Conference of 1966, we found a rich debate about universities. We agree with some of the cases and disagree on others. There is one point in particular that caught our attention, in which the term accountability is associated to institutions of higher education, the cultural component. Culture constitutes one of the most important tasks universities involve since it *impacts social order* (p. 23). In addition, a crucial passage is offered, towards the understanding of university social responsibility as culture.

A university of research and teaching, whether public or private, has the accountability of an authentic culture because it participates essentially in the University of Knowledge and because it aspires to situate the riches of a particular culture within an ensemble of spiritual and material values of humanity, establishing a culture. Within the national community, where the university exists, this should proclaim the indefeasible demands of truth and justice (p. 24).

This quote reveals that human thinking and its works represent actions that result from university studies, because within them resides the responsibility of an authentic culture. Universities cultivate material and spiritual knowledge, as well as the spirituality and intellectualization of life as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The lesson extracted from the Pax Romana Conference is close to that expressed by other authors. In his book, Basabe (1983) points out that *the unit of the human spirit establishes the organic unit of culture* (p. 63). Thus, the unit of culture is the foundation of universities, because culture is the fruit and seed of humanity and allows the university to be endowed with the philosophy of human consciousness.

Based on these contributions, we conceive that responsibility for the university is a unit of *Being and Acting*, like an eternal return to the essential questions of life and the infinite de-objectification of the architecture of life. To put it simply, the university must attend to the spiritual and the material in adherence to the universal values of life, such as questioning and a permanent reflection of our past, present and future.

Asking questions is an inescapable task within the university. In any department or school of higher education studies, the faculty and staff tirelessly test diverse questions, some are practical and others are deeper, but all of them implicate a degree of consciousness. Conscience is used in two senses: cognitive and moral. Within these questions, we have the possible and the practical. This begs for a critical attitude while exercising freedom of thought within a liberal type of education.

Tearing apart human constructions is also an inescapable task for universities. No social construction will last forever; no matter how many times they are presented as such. Human architecture is fortunately and inevitably condemned to be *de-objectified* by the judgment of history. In other words, it will be judged by new facts and human thought in a different context. When works constructed by man overpower him and acquire a natural vitality, then something is wrong.

University social responsibility, in this congruent unit of being and acting, forms itself within free-thinking. Nevertheless, when the unit is fragmented or the life vision is reduced to only a part of society, institutions of higher education, unmistakably, are in crisis. Fragmentation occurs when the university permits limitations to human education and does not allow diversity within its areas of reflection and creation. Reduction, on the other hand, occurs when the university is no longer critical and curious about education. Its freedom and autonomy is debilitated and the intellectual and artistic potential of its members are set aside. Reduced education, lacking the comprehensive, curiosity and criticism, ends with the idea of an unfinished conscience and cuts the individual short on what Freire (2010) called *educability of being*, the education of being and acting as an specificity to the service of life.

In this order of ideas, our thesis is that university social responsibility is currently fragmented. That culture, truth and justice as an essential part of universities mission has been submerged by the weight of the academic market. Universities are going through an identity crisis which is characterized by ambivalence between being a cultural space, in the sense above described, and a commercial establishment of knowledge and a diploma producer.

If we look at the logic of being a commercial establishment of knowledge and diploma mills, the university must comply with the parameters of any company: *efficiency, performance, competitiveness* and *benefit*. At the same time, it is blamed for the bad structures in society afflicting the planet, including poverty, violence, environmental

crisis, etc. Universities have lost their ability to confront the heteronymous powers, mainly the government and the private sector. They also have internal contradictions which have drained their structures.

The advancement of knowledge, science and technology within the university represents a titanic struggle against the coercion of money and the ideological ambitions of politics. The everyday struggle from College students, staff and the institution is the ambiguity between duty and material demands. Our duty is to social responsibility, while material demands have converted and fragmented this term into accountability. The balance, for the last three decades, has tipped closer and closer to material demands.

University accountability *exists* under the economic logic of assuming a company type vision. In this context, accountability is regarded as a management mechanism which impacts university identity and relevancy. The university is reduced or compared to any commercial establishment regulated by quality norms and oriented toward the maximization of profits. The accountability of universities, as in any company, is to maximize benefits.

For universities, accountability and the idea of maximizing benefits emerged during the sixties, out of the theoretical framework of economics. The politics of education date back to the eighties during the Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher period. Milton Friedman discusses this in his 1980 book, *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*. He lays out the idea that education, including university education, should be part of the economic marketplace in the following way: "Education must be considered the industry of education and be based upon competitiveness, just like restaurants and bars have to compete for their clients" (p. 235). And he continues:

The problems in higher education have to do with quality and equality. The low cost of university attracts not only those who are interested in improving themselves but also those who are just taking a break before working. The more the cost is for university education, the more people would take it seriously [...] *universities sell teaching and the students buy it*" (p. 244).

The same ideas are mentioned in his 1970 article in *New York Times Magazine*, *The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits*, from which we quote the following remarks: "In a free-enterprise, private-property system, a corporate executive is an employee of the owners of the business. That accountability is to conduct the business in accordance with the owner's desires, which generally will be to make as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom" (p. 1).

He adds: the difficulty of exercising *social accountability*, illustrates, of course, the great virtue of private competitive enterprise—it forces people to be responsible for their own actions and makes it difficult for them to *exploit* others for either selfish or unselfish purposes. They can do well, but only at their own expense (p. 3).

The assumption of Friedman can be summarized as follows. Universities represent an industry of education, which, just like companies, must produce with quality and efficiency, taking care of the interests of its stockholders and clients and leaving behind problem-solving to the government or other competent individuals. The objective is focused on performance. Under this economic basis, universities are no longer conceived as non-profit cultural institutions, but as an economic organizations or establishments. When assuming this identity, including the historic identity of a cultural institution, it takes a kind of accountability which is not its own and for which it is not prepared.

The idea of knowledge as a common good is lost in transit and turns into a business concept with the need for maximizing efficiency within an economic system. University actions which have to do with solidarity, social action, philanthropy and selflessness appear to be in direct conflict with new parameters and values within the rationale of economic management of social accountability, in a discursive and factual way. We perceive that in the last three decades, there has been a transfer of accountability to social accountability, which has meant the consolidation of the policy of accountability itself.

In the area of comparative studies within contemporary universities, it is argued that the transfer of the term accountability to university social responsibility has meant that the university has taken on a new social contract between the government and society, going from a political contract to a company contract. In the past, the political contract was based upon autonomy and participation from government in higher education, social commitment, educability of self, a critical conscience for society and, attention to scientific and technological development. Now, the company contract represents a different concept.

Neave (1994) argues that the new role is based upon the rationale of administrative management and its objective is efficiency in the academic market, generating a large scale economy, which can be perceived in the privatization of universities and higher education in general. Company control has meant that the university is under some control, regulations and, above all, interventionism of heteronymous powers. Neave (1994) illustrates the meaning

of this contract with a metaphor: do we have the right on having represented the western systems of higher education like to the wretched Prometeo, chained to the rock with his entrails torn every day by the eagle of budget and intervention (p. 397)?

The idea of this new contract is shared by distinct specialists in the studies about universities, including Clark (2000, 2000a, 2000b), Teichler and Sadlak (2000), Becher (2001), Brunner (2006), and Levy (2002).

For instance, Levy (2002) associates the new contract with a tendency towards social accountability, also known as *Americanization*. This author identifies accountability as the foundation for the university reform. This word already entails accountability, to which we will add the word social because it responds to the dynamics of the market, accepting its rules and imperatives. He points out that this new accountability is associated to two imperatives related to each other in which national legislation is minimal: 1) institutions and their *clients* basically choosing their own highways and, 2) the acceptance of the results of their own choices.

These results are usually variable, but this does not mean they are wrong or should be annihilated by the national legislation. The new social accountability, as a consequence, represents a very distinct form of the concept of standardization through legislation or public politics. There is a great variety of options and policies: It is a “market” ruling the institutions of higher education. This market is not purely inexpensive and it is definitely not *laissez faire*, but the word “market” is suitable for expressing the idea of competition with minimum central controls, rules, predetermined action and standardization (p. 56).

This illustrates that the new social accountability of universities is associated with the market, contrary to what was expressed by Levy (2002). Personally, we believe that it is a damaging concept when introduced to the universities as a policy taken directly from the market, since it is determined and ruled by the dynamics of supply and demand. Minimum controls refer to labor deregulation, because there is excessive control over the management of resources and their results. The market is the academic market. The term is recognized in specialized literature concerning studies about universities as *marketization*, *commercialization* or *commoditization*. As in all type of markets, the academic is ruled by liberalization, privatization, flexibility, deregulation, the generation of social and human capital, as well as cognitive development.

In other words, there is competition in the market, which Levy (2002) describes as a no purely economics, but we insist that it is. For instance, company rules are accepted, but no one refers to the public university as a company. If we do it, we would cut out the cultural sense of its existence ceasing the real sense of the university. On the contrary, public universities generate knowledge, science and technology for management, the containment of their essence and the promotion of human and social capital.

The new social responsibility of university rests on the assumption of efficiency and rationalization. Brunner (2006) expresses it clearly: “the assumption is that more competition, less regulations and a major use on the part of the governments of market type of mechanisms will result in more productive, efficient, innovative universities and at the same time there will be diminished the costs of dealing caused by the governmental interventions and the bureaucratic regulations” (p. 5).

There is a direct connection between Milton Friedman’s thesis concerning social responsibility in commercial establishments and, the changes in universities because of the accountability mentioned by the authors we have referred to in this paper. We find centrality in the stockholders and a sense of distance from social subjects which are not part of the dynamics of the market. The reforms in universities and in higher education are tired of this assumption which forced them to commercialize the main services offered by the university: *education*, *development* and *research*. We could cite examples of university policies or speeches following this trend; however, we will focus on one which demonstrates this bewilderment for the academic market.

On August 24, 2010, the following statement was published in *La Jornada* newspaper, referring to the World Youth Conference in 2010. It was lectured by the Secretary of Social Development for the federal government of Mexico.

The secretary not only encouraged young people to go to university in order to become educated and get a good job, but to become entrepreneurs. “Though you may not believe it, we all have this ability and not having the capital is not an obstacle for should it be an excuse.” He gave them the recipe for achieving this. He said that you must be an entrepreneur and apply the four M’s: market, market, market and more market. But they must also apply the four E’s: enthusiasm, enthusiasm, enthusiasm and more enthusiasm.

The new social responsibility of the university associated to the market for the change from a crisis in industrial capitalism towards *cognitive capitalism* or *biocapitalism* (Vercellone, 2004). We are moving from capitalism based purely on serial production physical labor to capitalism based on knowledge and information. The principles

of austerity, privatization, liberalization, deregulation and flexibility which have been present for at least two decades with the logic of the Washington Consensus, have not produced the expected results. They have caused more problems than solutions to capitalism, which was evident during the economic development crisis. To come out of the actual crisis, we looked for goods which were not considered tangible or sellable in the past. This turned out to be knowledge, which universities and other institutions of higher learning possess. With the term accountability applied to the institutions of higher education, the handicap of the knowledge machine emerged. Therefore, the key to economic growth and competitiveness resides in the knowledge of economy as a way of putting value to capital.

3. Accountability vs Biocapitalism

What Milton Friedman suggested regarding the term accountability was not enough to address this issue. A shift was observed towards *biocapitalism*. This is explained by Carlo Vercellone (2004) underlying three main reasons: the first refers to the ecological limits of industrial growth; 2) the second refers to the opening of a new position in the academic market considered as the social capital and with it, the creation of the New International Division of Labor (NIDL). Finally, the third one embodies the continuity of the State-Nation decline. However, we would add a fourth reason to the list which refers to the corporations which expropriate, accumulate great benefits and, at the same time, generate irreversible damage to biodiversity.

The social controversies they have produced in the last few decades have driven these transnational companies to a constant crisis due to corruption at their highest levels and their needs to privatize life. For example, many companies patent natural organisms as well as those created in a lab.

In this context, the discussion of economic development has taken the form of sustainable development. This posture favors bringing the environment closer and closer to the economy. The initial spirit was weakened once it was expropriated by an economic view of sustainability. When we add a twist of sustainability to social accountability, the company has assumed accountability for its own destructive actions towards the environment. Edward Freeman (1996) is a representative of the new school in social responsibility in its conceptual foundations. The author stated, “The increase of concern for the natural ambience means that there exist new human relations that must happen to be a part of the equation of the organizations, and that the change of the idea of the *cost-benefit* for the concept of *sustainable development* means that the frame of time has changed for the more immediate one” (p. 95).

Companies have *naturalized*—expropriated—the concern for the environment inherited from the green movement and dressed it up as economic development with sustainability, but they have not lost the spirit of profitability and maximization. Privately, they have institutionalized a *Fast Track* policy towards growth and sustainable development, but publically they present it as social accountability.

Today, we experience the boom of a socially responsible *company* worldwide. Paradoxically, we do not know how many forests have been destroyed in the publication of articles about social environmental accountability. Now, the care of the environment has been pulled towards profitability, according to the nature of the market. At the beginning of this century (in 2001), the green book of socially responsible company was published by the European Union, in order to legitimize this aim.

The majority of the definitions pertaining social responsibility of the companies understand this concept as the voluntary integration of the social and environmental concerns associated to their business transactions as well as their affiliations with the allies. To be socially responsible does not only imply the fulfillment of juridical obligations, but it also entails investing “more” in the human capital, the environment and the relations with their interlocutors (p. 7).

Additionally, we find that companies limit themselves in their degradation of the environment when they find themselves involved in outrages as the cases of *Monsanto*, *Enron*, *Kmart*, *Walmart*, *Xeros*, etc. These companies have shifted their ethical principles to social responsibility, though more through discourse than reality. The diagnosis was that company ethics were in crisis and the solution consisted in working within a framework of company sustainability. In other words, they move towards an ethic of sustainability that considers the impact provoked by the economic formula of the company without going against the *natural laws* of the market.

Ethics are defined in a pragmatic sense when the idea of social responsibility is introduced into the company. Edward Freeman defines responsibility as follows: “the form in which our decisions affect the others. It also refers to the study of the rights and the obligations of the individuals; the study of the moral rules that they apply when they make decisions, as well as the essence of their personal relationships” (p. 106). For this author, there is no difference between morality and ethics. He argues that the rationale behind this provokes ambiguity. For this

reason, he suggests to focus on the discussion about ethics because the issue about morality makes the business world more uncomfortable.

The aforementioned definition highlights that, with respect to the term accountability, the company must take into account all individuals involved in the company. Milton Friedman refers it as the stockholders, but we must also take into account other stakeholders, those who also participate in the success of the company.

4. Final Discussions

After this concise review of the displacement of the term accountability to social responsibility when applied to institutions of higher education, we find that the arguments of Milton Friedman and Edward Free man are complement to each other when it comes to explain and expose the concept of social accountability. For the first author, social responsibility is a term associated with quality and efficiency. For the second, the idea is essentially associated with ethics. Instead of being different approaches on social accountability, the two arguments complement each other because they define a socially responsible company as an efficient being with ethical quality.

However, what occurs in companies is not distant to what happens in universities. We should remember that these institutions have become, whether they wanted to or not, business organizations without being particularly based on businesslike type of structures. At this point, we observe inconsistency as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, which has generated a conflict of identity and accountability when it is analyzed within the institutions of higher education.

All of this can be noted when accepting a new social contract in higher studies, based on social responsibility (*new accountability*). When there is a change towards sustainability from social responsibility in companies, there is also a change in universities in the same direction. Therefore, university social responsibility is influenced by and adopts accountability from companies. Even though, some institutions still deny it.

The term social responsibility as it is used in universities includes the ideas and principles of ethical quality; efficiency of performance; sustainability; attention to environmental impact; consideration of the stakeholders; the formation of social capital; and the standardization with a methodology based on indicators. Just like the concept of accountability, deforestation is now part of the dissemination of university social responsibility, complemented with the boom of papers on the topic.

In this sense, we suggest that the proposals which have been most quoted and taken from *François Vallaey*s (2008) and the *Construye University* in País, Chile. Besides, the nuances and exceptions of their proposals, we find parallelism in time with the shift of accountability as taken directly from the corporations and its isomorphism into social responsibility as part of the institutions of higher education. In the first case, the changes coincide time-wise within capitalism. In the second case, the conception coincides with the new era of sustainability. For example, Vallaey's defines USR (University Social Responsibility) as: a policy of continuous improvement in the university conducive to the effective compliance of its social mission through four processes: 1) ethical and environmental management of the institution; 2) education of responsible and supportive citizens; 3) production and dissemination of socially pertinent knowledge and; 4) social participation and promotion in development which is more humane and sustainable (p. 208).

Although we observe coincidences between companies and institutions of higher education, they have different objectives and directions, as well as risks and benefits. The company restructures itself when faced with a crisis and legitimizes itself while obtaining better comparative advantages in the market. The university accentuates its bipolarity and becomes more fractured in its accountability while going through the process of *marketization*.

Both company and institutional social responsibilities, walking hand to hand, will go on to the second wave of the management system based principally on *product-supply* and *accountability* indicators. The first wave dealt with ISO 9000 Quality Management Systems and ISO 14000 Environmental Management systems. The second wave is now introduced by the ISO 26000. The first wave of university social responsibility dates back to ISO 9001 whose main aim was to certify all the administrative processes, academics and research. On the other hand, ISO 14001 aimed to certify environmental improvement; whereas the second wave, ISO 26000, is mainly oriented to certify the management of social responsibility. Up to now, the certification has been based upon external and internal appraisal and audits which stress on the efficiency of service processes. With the development of university social responsibility, under the shelter of marketization, we need to open new debates about accountability, dryly, from the university, as we try to address in the following paragraphs.

Our position is that reflection about university accountability should not come from management towards essence, as it is taken when the term social responsibility is applied to higher education institutions. We cannot

forget that the university is not a commercial entity. The university is a social institution devoted, in general, to the cultivation of knowledge, art, and the empowerment of individuals through education in a free and responsible manner. It attends to the requests of scientific, humanistic, technological, artistic and professional development universes.

The university social responsibility is a social network that articulates different objectives such as education, scientific contributions, technological developments, artistic expressions, and culture. With this in mind, the university is a multiversity or as Burton Clark (2000, 2004a, 2004b) defines it: a confederation which is organized by Divisions, Departments, Faculties, Schools, Institutes, Laboratories, Centers, Coordinators, etc. Each space has an objective within its disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary domain. Each university community contributes to the knowledge base as well as to the speculative and scientific knowledge.

The responsibility of the university holds two directions: one from outside-in, and other from inside-out. In the first case, the university has curricular objectives, with scientific programs, technological device programs and programs of art and culture. In the second case, the university has objectives having to do with society and the care of the planet. University social responsibility moves in both directions simultaneously. Moreover, it generates and regenerates new interpretations and meta-interpretations. This is the constituent element of the *Being* and *Acting* unit of the university.

In this sense, university social responsibility includes ontology (the evolution of the university) and ontic values (Ortega & Gasset, 2001). University social responsibility cannot be reduced to a model of management based on performance indicators, because the term accountability does not include the human condition.

The social responsibility of the university implies a new social contract of the institutions of higher education. In the end, who signs the *new contract*? This reflection implies asking a series of questions about the immense problems the planet is facing.

First, our spirituality has limits. We are predators and hostile to life on this planet. We act like owners of our environment and behave under the foundations of private property. We forget that in the tree of life we are just another species that inhabits the cosmos. We must come together in the task of the cultural conversion of humanity based on the factual principle that we are only part of the Earth (Note 2).

Our knowledge of biodiversity has limits. We are a *bio-illiterate* society. In the Catalogue of Life (2010) published by the *UN Convention on Biological Diversity*, dedicated to the *International Year of Biodiversity*, it is reported the existence of 1.25 million species which represent 10% of the 10 million believed to exist on the planet. These figures reveal that 90% of living species on this planet is not documented.

Our human judgment has limits as well. We are losing our sensibility towards pain. We are indifferent to death. Violence is common place and has many manifestations occurring in smaller and smaller spaces. We are losing our ability to be amazed at injustice and irresponsibility which threaten the peace of all species. Wars persist and intensify to the level of a latent nuclear war. There are miles of nuclear warhead capable of reaching their targets within minutes and, in some cases, within seconds. At this moment there are approximately 40 warlike conflicts worldwide. Spiritual, emotional and material poverty is on-the-rise. There are approximately one billion poor people in the world. Emotionally—which is much more difficult to calculate—we estimate that each nuclear family is becoming poorer. Universal health care is still a dream. Annually, 11 million children die from curable diseases. As our senselessness increases each second, so does this *Must do* list.

Additionally, our soul has limits which can be referred to as *the anemic life*. Selfishness, greed, lies, the disregard for life, etc., appears to be non-stoppable. Emotions are erratic and confused around the world.

We have to think about the limits we are confronted with. Universities, the quintessential home of culture and free-thinking, need to reconstruct their responsibility to respond to the feelings and actions of life, taking a step back and escaping from a gradual process of marketization. University social responsibility is located within the social demands of reality, but at the same time, it is separated from the reality of humankind. On one side, it is the medium with which we can improve the environment, and on the other side, it is the end of humanity along with other species. As stated by Boff (2010), a change in the paradigm is urgent:

“Without spirituality, without a radical experience of *Being* and without an immersion into the original *Source* of all human beings, where a new horizon of hope, certainly we will not achieve a joyful journey. We struggle because the old is still around and the new cannot emerge yet. We live in urgent times. These urgencies make us think and the dangers make us create Noah’s arks in order to save ourselves. We have not confronted the Earth’s current situation. But we still believe that building a world where we can co-exist well is still within our reach” (p. 1).

This is where university social responsibility should rely on, the radical experience of *Being* and *Acting*. Institutions of higher education, especially public ones, have an advantage of being diverse, where each universe can complete its work, nourishing itself with critical and fundamental experiences. The real social responsibility of the universe is with life, cultivating a variety of knowledge and duties. We know that this symbolizes more utopia than reality, but a diurnal utopia is preferable upon the actual darkness which represents the failure of different systems of higher education in Mexico and Latin America.

As a final conclusion, the actual university management system is mainly based upon the model of accountability directly taken from the business discourse. The management model should be re-constructed in the opposite manner, looking at what *the being* of the university and, later, determining the way it should be administratively driven. In the quest to create an efficient university with ethical qualities based upon company models, resources are regulated without reinforcing their capacity, and applying an incorrect principal of social responsibility.

References

- Basave, F. V. (1983). *Ser y Que Hacer de la Universidad: Estructura y misión de la universidad vocacional*. México: Promesa.
- Becher, T. (2001). *Tribus y territorios académicos. La indignación intelectual y las culturas de las disciplinas*. Barcelona, España: Gedisa.
- Boff, L. (2010). Lo viejo agoniza y a lo nuevo le cuesta nacer. In *Koinonia*. Retrieved from <http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/boff/articulo.php?num=396>
- Brunner, J. (2006). *Mercados universitarios: Ideas, instrumentos y seis tesis en conclusión*. Santiago de Chile: Centro de Estudio Miguel Enríquez.
- Burton, C. (2000). Collegial entrepreneurialism in proactive universities. *Change*, 32(1), 10-12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00091380009602704>
- Burton, C. (2004a). Sustaining change in universities. In *Society for Research into Higher Education*. London: Open University Press.
- Burton, C. (2004b). Delineating the character of the entrepreneurial university. *Higher Education Policy*, 17, 355-370. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300062>
- COMISIÓN DE LAS COMUNIDADES EUROPEAS (CCE). (2001). *Libro Verde: Fomentar un marco europeo para la responsabilidad social de las empresas*. Brusela: CCE.
- Freeman, E. et al. (1996). *Administración*. México: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Freire, P. (2010). *El grito manso*. México: Siglo XXI.
- Friedman, M., & Rose, F. (1980). *Libertad de elegir. Hacia un nuevo liberalismo económico*. Barcelona, España: Grijalbo.
- Friedman, M. (September, 1970). The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/libertarians/issues/friedman-soc-resp-business.html>
- Jarque, J. (1966). *La responsabilidad social de la universidad*. Pax Romana, Barcelona: Estela.
- Levy, D. (2002). “La nueva responsabilidad social en la educación superior. Repercusiones en el Estado y el derecho”. In A. Bernasconi (Ed.), *La educación superior ante el derecho*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Biblioteca Americana.
- Neave, G. et al. (1994). *Prometeo encadenado. Estado y educación en Europa*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Ortega, J., & Gasset. (2001). *Misión de la universidad*. Buenos Aires. Retrieved from <http://www.esi2.us.es/~fabio/mision.pdf>
- Poy, Laura, García, & Carlos. (2010). Heriberto Félix critica la *esquizofrenia* y receta mercado y más mercado. *La Jornada*, 3.
- Teichler, U., & Sadlak, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Higher education research: Its relationship to policy and practice*. Oxford: Pergamon/IAU Press.
- Vallaes, F. (2008). Responsabilidad social universitaria: Una nueva filosofía de gestión ética e inteligente para las universidades. In *Revista de Educación Superior y Sociedad* (Nueva época, año 13, núm. 2, sep).

Caracas: IESALC.

Vercellone, C. (2004). Las políticas de desarrollo en tiempos del capitalismo cognitivo. In *Oliver Blondeau et al. Capitalismo cognitivo, propiedad intelectual y creación colectiva*. Madrid: Traficante de sueños.

Notes

Note 1. The educative system in Mexico, as well as in another countries around the world, is divided on three levels: primary education, secondary education and higher education, there is also an intermediate level: the preparatory school. Talking about Mexico, the politics present in the Constitution of the United States of Mexico, mentions that, all the individuals has free access to the first two levels: primary education and secondary education. The State has the obligation to bring free admission to these levels all around the country. This education supplied by the government is called *Public education*. In the case of these two first levels, we use the term Public schools or Public universities (in case of the preparatory school) to refer the kind of institutions that belongs to the State. Nevertheless, because of factors as demography, quality, capability, and economic politics, the education is also supplied by particulars: enterprises, civic associations and other organizations. These organizations make up institutions that bring education in all the three levels and of course it represents some costs. We are talking about Private education; to be more specific, we talk about private universities. So, public universities supply the demand of public education; private universities supply the demand of private education.

Note2. Humility comes from *humilis* which means under the Earth.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).