



Strategic Culture Approach To University Social Responsibility In The Context Of Phenomenology

Javier Mauricio García Mogollón^{1*}

^{1*}Full-Time Professor at the University of Pamplona. Email: jmogollon@unipamplona.edu.co

Citation: Javier Mauricio García Mogollón et al (2023), Strategic Culture Approach To University Social Responsibility In The Context Of Phenomenology, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(2) 594-601
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i2.7297

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Strategic culture is a topic that has been little explored in university organizations in the Latin American context and scarcely linked to University Social Responsibility (USR). These two terms present a disruption, since the first one projects the planned and the doing, which in the second one has had a series of insufficient, distorted and unfocused perceptions related to the approach to the phenomenon of study. Therefore, the purpose of the work focused on understanding the strategic culture as a binding factor of university social responsibility at the University of Pamplona. The study was located in the post-positivist paradigm from a qualitative approach, supported by in-depth interviews, and whose design included the epistemological orientation and theoretical approach of the two notions, as well as the unveiling of their articulating meanings. The theoretical perspective made it possible to identify core categories and generate meanings that allowed interpreting the information, contrasting reality with the referential theory and generating substantive contributions. From the practical point of view, it allowed presenting valid solutions from the collection of impressions of the phenomenon, generating conclusions based on a strategic diagnosis, formulating guidelines and actions oriented to the optimization of the processes of the institutional corporate culture.

Key Words: Strategy, phenomenology, social responsibility, University.

Para citar este artículo / To cite this Article

STRATEGIC CULTURE APPROACH TO UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Strategic culture is a topic that has been little explored in university organizations in the Latin American context and scarcely linked to University Social Responsibility (USR). These two terms present a disruption, since the first one projects the planned and the doing, which in the second one has had a series of insufficient, distorted and unfocused perceptions related to the approach to the phenomenon of study. Therefore, the purpose of the work focused on understanding the strategic culture as a binding factor of university social responsibility at the University of Pamplona. The study was located in the post-positivist paradigm from a qualitative approach, supported by in-depth interviews, and whose design included the epistemological orientation and theoretical approach of the two notions, as well as the unveiling of their articulating meanings. The theoretical perspective made it possible to identify core categories and generate meanings that allowed interpreting the information, contrasting reality with the referential theory and generating substantive contributions. From the practical point of view, it allowed presenting valid solutions from the collection of impressions of the phenomenon, generating conclusions based on a strategic diagnosis, formulating guidelines and actions oriented to the optimization of the processes of the institutional corporate culture.

Key words: Strategy, phenomenology, social responsibility, University.

INTRODUCTION:

In the interest of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to show their corporate dynamics as the essence of what they do, issues stand out that, sometimes, are approached from a reductionist point of view and, on many occasions, are focused on large commercial corporations with a profit motive. Universities, on the other hand, far from being oriented to the accumulation of capital, assume in their character of complex organization, ontological commitments proper to their nature and essence, such as creating and transferring knowledge while educating and forming the human being in its integrality, and even promoting or accompanying the changes of society. However, nowadays, the university, which is presumed to be modern, seeks to cultivate the formation of researchers and intellectual professionals.

In this sense, the university develops its strategic horizon in three missionary pillars: research, academia and extension; which allow it to achieve the objectives proposed by the top management and the approach to the contexts under its territorial circumscription or direct influence, from a responsible and mutual aid perspective. Thus, the intervention and articulation of academic and research management should allow the confluence of actions immersed in the university strategic culture; however, such interventions show greater opacity when emphasis is placed on social management and its real impact on the needs of the community. In the above statement it is possible to appreciate the position of Martínez (2010), who states that:

the identity of the university and the boundaries that separate it from the community are clearly delineated. Missions are compartmentalized: research is not always articulated with teaching practice, and it is completely detached from extension, the only one in charge of "building bridges" to a "target" or "beneficiary" community, whose demands must not "contaminate academic purity." (p.31).

To illustrate this discourse, Goyo, Figueredo, Méndez, Chirinos, and Rivero (2012), propose a university developing its socio-educational role in academic, research and extension processes, articulated and related in the social context. In other words, an attempt is made to define the modern university as the manifestation of multiple dilemmas with respect to its missionary commitment, this being a public exercise governed by the top management of these organizations; however, many universities, especially those in Latin America, debate under several perspectives that may be contradictory.

In addition, Sáez (2007), adds a series of aspects that reveal the contrasts of today's universities in terms of their corporate strategic vision, and which, in a certain way, are very different from the business sector. Among them is the scarce entrepreneurial vision in the academic world, since HEIs develop training and research processes that do not correspond to reality and do not represent educational relevance; in addition to the lack of agility to present accurate solutions that respond to the demands of the environment. In addition, while time is a very costly variable for companies, in universities it is a less significant aspect.

In this regard, Vallaes (2008) mentions the academic institution, to a certain extent, guilty in the face of society's usual problems. As Edgar Morin comments: our "earth ship", that luxurious techno-scientific ship but without direction. As a result of the above, the necessary university reform of social responsibility is proposed, in which he proposes to eliminate its cosmetic and superficial appearance, and to outline a profound reflection on the social meaning of the production of knowledge and the professional training of leaders in the era of science, technology and innovation.

The approaches described above, constitute the reason that led to carry out the project from a phenomenological vision, for which it was necessary to answer questions in order to understand the reality of the problem and the meanings that derive from it. Hence, the problem is formulated by externalizing the following question: In what way is Strategic Culture understood in the experience as a binding factor of university social responsibility?

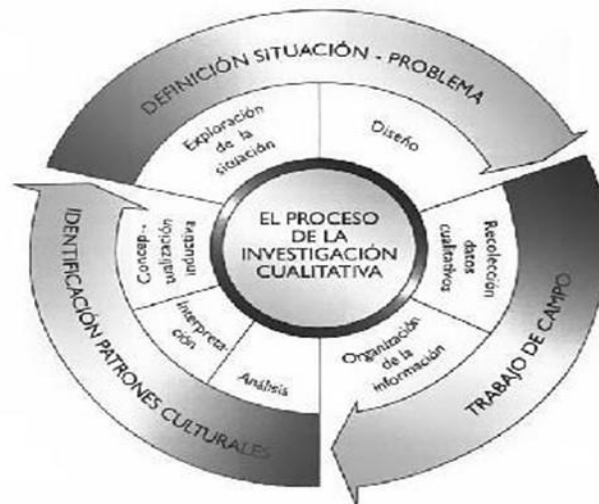
The following questions were derived from the previous question: How would you describe the strategic culture developed by the HEI? Which elements integrate the strategic culture present in the HEI? What are the functions of the strategic culture developed in the HEI? What do you understand by university social responsibility from your experience in the HEI? What do you think is the impact generated by university social responsibility in the HEI? Do you consider that the strategic culture of the university has an impact on social responsibility?

Methodology

In this section the research methodology is presented, with a qualitative approach taking into account the expectant level addressed in this research project; therefore, it is unavoidable to introduce the topic of scientific thought, to then converge with the conception of the Paradigm of this proposed thesis. Bunge (2000), outlines from his criterion that science is a universal style of thought and action that contributes to all fields of knowledge. In this regard, the beginning of the study corresponds to the body of knowledge available to support its procedural development. Referring to the scientific method, Santa and Feliberto, (2010), support the need to review previous concepts and trends to reach new knowledge, so that, by using a procedure consisting of a logical sequence of activities, it is possible to discover the characteristics of phenomena, the internal relationships between its elements and their connections with other phenomena. All this through reasoning and testing, demonstration and verification.

It is inferred from the above that the methodological form of the research represents a set of processes that allow the achievement of the stated purposes. In this case and according to Gialdino (2006), the work appropriates qualitative research in the way it allows to turn the interest towards people's lives, the interpretation of subjective perspectives, supported by their stories, behaviors, experiences, interactions, actions, meanings, in a situated way. Furthermore, the interpretative nature of the research allowed analyzing social phenomena within the phenomenological conception, that is, in their natural environment, in which theories emerge from the observed data (Mejía, 2014). Additionally, the phenomenological method allowed the approach to the individual human world (Sabaj and Salvo, 2005). Within the methodological structure, an epistemological posture based on realism with a phenomenological study approach was defined. In this sense, it was possible to broaden this design interpretation by defining the research model proposed by Bonilla and Rodríguez (1997) represented below.

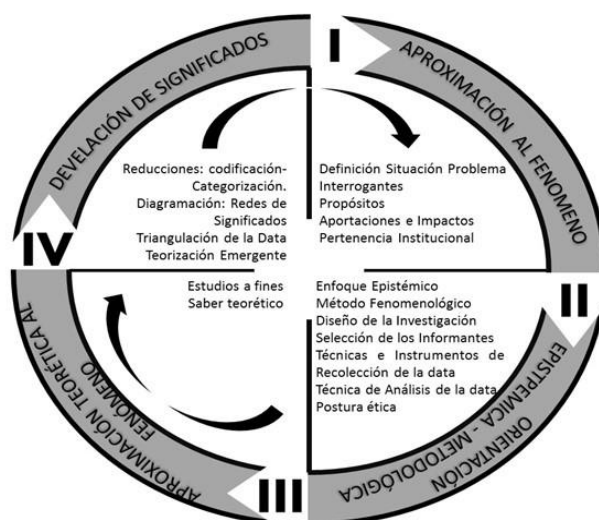
Figure 1. Qualitative research process



Source: Bonilla and Rodríguez, 1997

This research presents a path structured by three phases that correspond to the design of Bonilla and Sehck (2005). The first phase presents the exploration of the problem, its causes and effects. The second phase corresponds to *field work*, through which qualitative data collection and information organization were carried out. The third phase was proposed as the *identification of cultural patterns*, and included the analysis and interpretation of the data generated, the process of inductive conceptualization, and the review of results to avoid biases in the process of generating inductive knowledge (see Figure 2). (see Figure 2).

Figure 4: Qualitative research model



Source: Bonilla and Rodríguez (1997), adapted by García (2021).

The applied model allowed to know the strategic culture and its link with the university social responsibility. In this exercise, it was determined that there was no systematic process to carry out a phenomenological research, which resulted in the design that emerged during the research process, allowing to specify the

appropriate path in its action through four juxtaposed moments: on the one hand, a phenomenological design aspect and on the other hand, the grounded theory design.

In relation to the criteria for the selection of key informants, it was possible to define the population and units to be investigated, constituted by a premeditated sample, an appropriate procedure to select the elements that make up the initial sample (Rodríguez, Gil and García, 1999), which made it possible to group the key informants (Martínez, 2009) according to their experience and position at the University of Pamplona (representatives of students, teachers and unions, and 5 experts. In reference to the data collection techniques, the in-depth interview was used (Taylor and Bogdan, 1987).

Theoretical and conceptual foundation

From a retrospective of university action, in the nineties of the last century, the scientific community is presented with a series of studies that conceive questions with pending answers; likewise, the evident existing juncture between private and public higher education. Therefore, a chronological reference stands out in the first allusions to the subject; product of which Sander (1996), concluded that "in Latin America it is necessary to solve the following questions in the university context: But what type of administration? And for what type of education? I am thinking of an innovative educational administration." (p.216)

On the other hand, in the context of higher education, the first antecedent mentioned by Levy (1991), is that private universities have generally fulfilled the purposes for which they were created, balancing needs or demands that have not been resolved within an inoperative public sector. The author postulates the existence of enormous differences between private and public education, arguing that "one can choose to praise or condemn the private sector for its distinctiveness from the public sector, but it is not enough to defend or minimize the private sector for pursuing the same goals as the public sector." (p.17)

Within the framework of the private and public contexts, it is necessary to refer to the realities presented by universities in Latin America, in whose geographical context the dilemmas and disparities are more profound. In this regard, in his thesis conclusions, Gaete (2011), determines as drawbacks present in universities "the difficulties to apply in a practical way the enormous volume of theoretical knowledge delivered by university faculty, as an important effect of this problem." (p.110). This is in addition to the fact that knowledge is outdated or disconnected from the current reality, which negatively affects society.

These factors turned into dilemmas of the university context allow detailing some aspects related to the business sector, through a topic linked to the behavior of academic organizations and called Organizational Culture. Within this framework, a critical stance is taken regarding the Argentine university, to which Nogueira and Góngora (2000), qualified it as a fractured organization, given that the institutional reality is built by discrete actions, casual convergences, recurrent confrontations and by a political organization lacking a unifying sense, from a profile generated from crystallizations of power, but not from consensus around values or projects.

Consequently, it is necessary to highlight the authors' exposition of the organizations that generate, link and transfer knowledge, whose performance scenario is characterized by the diversity of somber and virtuous reasoning; however, this reality faces a conjuncture evidenced allegedly in the lack of Strategic Culture; perspective that is mentioned below.

The first argumentation is related to the lack of knowledge of management as proposed by Professor Monagas of the Universidad de los Andes in Venezuela and the short-termism of university management as defined by Torres (1999). The following scenario represents the disarticulation between strategic culture and University Social Responsibility (USR), considering that the latter was initially proposed in the direction of the corporate model conditioned to the pace of the organization (Serna, 2007).

On the other hand, social responsibility as defined by Pelekais, Ferrer, Cruz & Romero (2007) and presented by Gaete (2011), requires a management model oriented to an organizational philosophy. In turn, Palencia, Bracho & Vargas (2007) argue the improbability that decisions and execution of actions are more connected to the needs of society due to some barriers of institutional resistance. To illustrate these precepts, they are interpreted giving order to each one of them.

Monagas (2005), refers to the Strategic Culture, conditioning it from his experience, given that many times the appreciations and conceptions of the problem situation in question are confused, since those who lead the university do not know where, how and when to act. This statement exposes a narrow reality exhibited in HEIs in a meager link between the strategic and the University Social Responsibility (USR), which is why university management must be confronted with these fundamental elements in the organizational culture of modern universities.

Based on these considerations, Arias (2002) interprets the concept of culture as a shared behavior, a way of thinking of the human being that makes up a society, deducing concepts of meanings and significances of thinking or acting to be appreciated as part of a culture. In other words, the dilemma between culture and strategy, from its composition as an expression (Serna, 2007), evidences that Strategic Culture corresponds to an element chained to the cultural content in a position of shared compression, for example, in manifestations of culture related to shared things (language, behaviors and emotions), whose interpretation alludes to the shared meaning.

Thus, it is necessary to propose strategic tools to reduce the parameters that generate inaccuracies within the organizations (Pereira and Rios, 2017). However, proposals such as the one proposed by Serna (2007) on the implementation of a corporate model adjusted to the compass of business organizations contrasts with the possibility of adoption in HEIs, since it must be additionally linked to a broader concept called Social Responsibility.

Similarly, Gaete (2011), argue that University Social Responsibility (USR) should be presented in an organizational management model that facilitates the recognition of decision-making processes and execution of actions more connected to the interests of society, so that HEIs assume an attitude and a permanent behavior of their work oriented towards an organizational philosophy that applies in its management a multiplicity of their own interests, but also those of their social environment.

It should be noted that the mission process from which it is attempted to react to social demand and is used in companies under the name of Social Responsibility, in the case of the university, is recognized and is immersed in a managerial perspective that is not formally and clearly visible in the work of the universities. To illustrate this approach Palencia, Bracho and Vargas (2007), perceive the problem of University Social Responsibility from each area of the organization, as a closed plot where the barriers of institutional resistance, the main pressure against university transformation, are lodged and take root.

Within this framework of operation, Social Responsibility has been assumed with a focus on social projection and linkage with the environment through the extension function only and not as part of the Social Capital, specifically contextual capital.

Now, Gonzales (2004), contributes in its deduction that the extension function is called to be monitored, through indicators and indexes of management and impact, which allow evidencing the social relevance of the university institutional work, since it is not possible to demonstrate the efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness of university management if the activities and projects, goals and results are not recorded. In this sense, it can be argued that, within its functionality, the management of Latin American universities presents experiences from complex situations of political order, governance, and interest groups affected by the decisions of senior management.

In a certain way, the requirements to comply with international standards demand a change in the management models used in business organizations and, as a consequence, permeate the management mission in universities.

In view of these considerations, not only external factors (economic and social policies), but also internal organizational situations, make it difficult to objectively develop the objective of University Social Responsibility (USR) in an environment of commitment management fostered by the top management of HEIs. Therefore, the university must direct its work from the organizational culture, recognizing the needs of the affected stakeholders, who are waiting for results with real and focused impact from the USR. In this way, it can contribute to the resolution of the problem that arises in modern society of humanizing organizations (Núñez, De la Peña-de León and Soto, 2019).

However, submerging the variable of University Social Responsibility (USR), within the theoretical context, allows finding many references and successful experiences related to the corporate sector, but they are meager and of low presence in topics related to publications and theses, mainly in the university context linked to the issue of university Strategic Culture and its relationship with social responsibility. It is possible that, deep down, the strategic culture for some universities is not directly linked to the (RSU), and if the problem situation is not taken into consideration, it will possibly remain as a tacit knowledge lecture for society, which expects explicit knowledge solutions.

It is for these reasons that structural problems are identified that do not allow HEIs to respond responsibly to society, a disruptive situation between what the institution does and what is desirable, sometimes presented in a rhetorical prospective, deliberate to maintain a purely corporate and politicized directive line.

This situation corners the democratic spaces in public universities, generated in some cases by situations conditioned to particularities of interest groups, forgetting the ethical and moral criteria with respect to the managerial work that supposedly should present an orientation from the approaches of the strategic culture and the University Social Responsibility.

The causes of these scenarios of uncertainty and transformation generated perhaps by the deformity of the strategic approaches that have become a formal transit document, dilute the desired reality in the Strategic Culture, not only corporate, for the focal case of universities, warning of the pending work on the University Social Responsibility (USR). The antagonism presented by the work of university management contrasts with to the needs expressed by society, where the university must confront the aforementioned problems, delimiting and recognizing the causes produced, their scope and repercussions for the HEI.

Results and Discussion

The description of the problem based on the premises set out at the beginning of the document allowed us to perceive, in an initially unfavorable way, the mission process developed by the University of Pamplona, to the

extent that they intend to show tangible results in the face of society's demands, without taking into account the impacts generated by USR and the need to generate a strategic cultural change in the institution.

For this reason, the fieldwork was focused on deepening about the strategic cultural phenomenon, to describe and recognize the perceptions and experiences of the management and academic authorities at the University of Pamplona, which allowed to verify how the intellectual capital in the university context has relevance in the university social responsibility (García-Mogollón, García-Mogollón and Malagon-Saenz, 2023).

It is worth clarifying that the answers to the above questions are supported from the phenomenological conception described by Rojas de Escalona (2010), when stating his position on the idea of capturing the essence of the phenomena framed in the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of human life. Consequently, and in correspondence with the central purpose of the research, some scenarios were analyzed that made it possible to understand, recognize and describe the Strategic Culture as a binding factor of the University Social Responsibility (USR).

With respect to the discussions generated, it can be stated that, upon identifying the strategic culture processes present at the University of Pamplona, it was possible to evidence the emergence of a strategic diagnosis, the formulation of objectives, the design and implementation of business strategies and control as a measure to reorient actions, and even to propose others focused on optimizing the processes of the corporate culture of the University. In addition, in correspondence with the stated purposes, when describing the components of the strategic culture developed at the University of Pamplona, the lack of direction and development of human talent and the excessive autonomy in the implementation of the processes and the strengthening of the values and beliefs that constitute the university culture were revealed.

In addition, upon learning about the internal dimension of university social responsibility, it became evident that it seeks the development of people (students) so that they can integrate into society in a productive and responsible manner, in compliance with institutional legal regulations.

As a result of the strategic diagnosis, a series of guidelines were developed based on five pillars focused on articulating the strategic culture and social responsibility of the University of Pamplona.

The first pillar consists of working collectively in a cohesive manner in order to generate synergy and avoid the dispersion of efforts, as characteristics that should integrate a strategic culture from the understanding of the University of Pamplona to form people who will be in charge of the social and economic reins of the country. In this sense, social responsibility is assumed as a duty that the institution has towards the families and communities that develop their lives around the academic campus. To this end, it is proposed to act through the establishment of collective responsibilities, after the formation of work teams led by members of the different university strata to which joint actions are delegated for the achievement of strategic objectives, as well as the implementation of a system of values and beliefs that strengthen the culture of the organization.

The second pillar refers to consensual decision making, given that it is common to observe vertical organizations in which decisions are made at the highest levels in an inconsistent manner. A strategic culture must summon all its human talent to contribute to the university's work and its complex dynamics, as this will imbue them with the commitment to link their personal objectives with the strategic objectives of the University of Pamplona. Empowering the different strata will allow the democratization of university management, which is why assemblies should be held among the strata when situations arise that are of collective interest.

The third guideline is demarcated by the construction of a corporate identity that defines the sense of the organizational culture, since this action allows reinforcing the spirit of relevance and leadership among the strata of the University of Pamplona, configuring a socially responsible institution with a favorable public opinion that, in turn, strengthens the corporate personality. To this end, it is proposed to make collaborators loyal to the identity of the organization through joint participation in the administrative, academic and extension processes developed by the institution. Therefore, senior management must create an incentive system that captures the passion of human talent to serve others and thus promote the university.

The fourth pillar is Thinking strategically, which means recognizing the university we have and imagining and projecting the university we want. Consequently, the university must develop mechanisms that allow it to reinvent itself and for this it must analyze the necessary means to achieve the transformations envisioned in the short, medium and long term. In this regard, it is necessary to bear in mind that the university strategy is complex and requires concentrated efforts to achieve the goals. Certainly, social responsibility is not an improvised action and much less isolated from the processes or components of the corporate culture, since it depends on this amalgam that the social transformation has as its core or epicenter the institution itself, but it is also a bidirectional intervention in which all (University-Society-Environment) evolve simultaneously in time.

As a fifth pillar, the University of Pamplona, understood as a socially responsible institution, has to design, within the framework of a strategic corporate culture, management indicators that allow it to reflect on the impact of the community and environmental projection generated. The purpose of this is to take timely measures before the possible reorientation of the actions developed in compliance with the established institutional and state regulations. In addition, the system of indicators enables the recognition and design of complementary strategies that leverage social responsibility from a shared vision.

As it can be observed, to understand the Strategic Culture as a binding factor of the University Social Responsibility conceived from the phenomenology, is to understand the experience of subjective positions that

in some cases are contradictory, but complement each other in a moment of status quo, where the benefits of the interest groups appear and disappear, being perceived the strategic culture as processes of human nature that are conformed by components of the strategic planning of the same university context.

On the other hand, it integrates the University Social Responsibility visualized as a collective task that seeks to transform the needs of the community into effective results; a large debt is perceived before the society that expects without delay the impacts: social, political, environmental and human development. Finally, it will be understood in the academic dissertation exercise, the need to reduce the gap between the strategic culture and its link with the USR, as a contribution to the managerial sciences.

Likewise, when characterizing the external dimension of university social responsibility, it is possible to conclude that there is little clarity and little intention to project the family, the community and the environment in the actions developed by the university, thus failing to comply with state policies on social responsibility.

Finally, the construction of guidelines aimed at establishing the strategic culture as a binding factor of university social responsibility was structured on five main pillars: collective work, consensual decision-making, corporate identity, strategic thinking and management indicators. The above is configured as a contribution to the organizational processes of Pampona University and a contribution to the strengthening of the generative sciences.

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