Chapter 15
University Social Responsibility and Its Effects on the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Growth: Small and Medium Enterprises in Chile

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ABSTRACT

From a descriptive-functional paradigm, this study explores how universities contribute to the promotion of entrepreneurship and the growth of small and medium enterprises in Chile. This fact constitutes the first approximation to the phenomenon of installing a national network of business development centers driven by the Technical Cooperation Service (SERCOTEC, for its acronym in Spanish), a private law corporation and a body dependent on the Ministry of Economy, Development, and Tourism of Chile. The study uses a qualitative methodology of phenomenological order, and it concludes as of diverse experiences about the achievements evidenced by a group of sixteen business owners advised by these centers from different locations of Chile.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter allows us to understand the role of Universities in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, through the perspective of a descriptive-functional paradigm by analyzing the experience of several support units that depend on the Technical Cooperation Service (SERCOTEC), a private law body that is under the Ministry of Economy, Development, and Tourism of Chile. The fundamental objective of this study is to observe how the Chilean Universities contribute to SME development due to knowledge and their diffusion and application in their territory of influence or ‘hinterland.’

It should be noted the relevance that the concept of University Social Responsibility (USR) is acquiring from the stakeholders’ approach. In the first part, we will address USR and how USR has been positioned as a strategic relationship with the community. In the second part, we will look at Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Chile and how the Universities contribute to the SME development in Chile. In the last part, it can be found recommendations, future research lines, and conclusions.

THE CHILEAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM AND UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is necessary to point out that the Chilean university system is constituted in a sophisticated way by institutions grouped according to their ownership and access to state funding. So, under the aegis of the Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities (CRUCH, for its acronym in Spanish), there are eighteen state universities that belong to the Consortium of Universities of the State of Chile (CUECH, for its acronym in Spanish), and nine private universities with state contribution grouped in the G9 University Network. Thirteen private universities are members of the Private Universities Corporation (CUP, for its acronym in Spanish) and twenty universities are independent actors. Although this last set of ten institutions are in a Single Admission System (SUA for its acronym in Spanish) to the Chilean universities of the CRUCH, where also adhere two higher education institutions of the CUP (CUP, 2018; DEMRE, 2018; Ministry of Education of Chile, 2017; Vega, Martinez & Morales, 2017; Martinez & Vega, 2015). Because of the complexity of the system, Muñoz and Blanco (2013) classified the universities into five groups: research universities, elite universities, large universities, accreditation universities and non-elitist universities. These groups even show an internal diversity that expands the types of existing universities, an issue that is enhanced in the last of the mentioned group.

Rothaermel, Agung, and Jiang (2007) point out that in many countries the Universities have contributed as a space for entrepreneurship and innovation. In the USA, for example, universities have increased their entrepreneurial activity in several dimensions such as patents and licenses, creating incubators, science parks, and university spin-outs as well as start-ups. In addition, in the European Union, there are various initiatives and efforts to transfer university technology to industry. However, there is a little record in a specialized study that can contribute to generating lines of action for entrepreneurship and technology transfer between universities and industry.

In Latin America, the concept and use of the USR are still incipient, although its work -especially in public universities- generates public value (Moore, 1995) it is not quantified, documented or evaluated. These are the cases of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, and Universidad de Guadalajara), Honduras
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