Chapter 2
Along the Pathway of University Missions: A Systematic Literature Review of Performance Indicators

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decades, the pressure on the university to facilitate direct application and exploitation of its knowledge and capabilities to contribute to social, cultural, and economic development has steadily increased. As a result, new missions have been recognized to universities, new theoretical frameworks have been developed, and new university models have been proposed, including the “entrepreneurial university”, the “civic university”, the “community-engaged university”, the “transformative university” or the “interconnected university”. Thus, a corresponding advancement of performance metrics and indicators used to assess the impact of university activities is required. Through a bibliometric and then a critical review of the extant literature, this study provides: i) an overall picture of the state-of-art of literature on universities’ missions and roles in regional development; ii) a systematisation of the contributions on performance measures and indicators of universities’ activities.
INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, research on the relationship between universities and local development has steadily increased (Harrison and Turok, 2017). Several theoretical frameworks have been developed, including the “triple helix”, the “quadruple helix” and the “quintuple helix” models of innovation (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Carayannis and Campbell, 2010; Carayannis and Rakhmatullin, 2014), the “learning region” (Shaw and Allison, 1999), the “regional innovation systems” (Benneworth et al., 2017), or the “smart specialization strategy” (Kempton et al., 2013). As a result of such conceptual and theoretical pathway, the pressure on the university to facilitate the direct application and exploitation of its knowledge and capabilities in order to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development is nowadays higher and higher (e.g., Etzkowitz, 2002, 2004, 2013; Napolitano and Riviezzo, 2008; Riviezzo and Napolitano, 2010, 2014; Urbano and Guerrero, 2013; Leih and Teece, 2016; Schmitz et al., 2017; Riviezzo et al., 2017; Riviezzo et al., 2019a).

In this regard, it is possible to maintain that universities are “overloaded” with new missions (Enders and Boer, 2009; Benneworth et al., 2017). For instance, to the third mission of contributing to the economic development, a fourth mission has been recognized to the university, that is a renewed civic engagement or civic responsibility within the community, the city and region of which it is part and on which it forms its identity (e.g., Goddard, 1999; Chatterton and Goddard, 2000; Thornton and Jaeger, 2008; Goddard and Vallance, 2013; Riviezzo et al., 2019b). Therefore, the university plays a key role as an “anchor” institution, which works with and in its community to create shared value (Goddard and Kempton, 2016). Part of the literature refers to this as the “third role” of the university (e.g., Goddard, 1999; Chatterton and Goddard, 2000) to indicate the need of an “increasing embeddedness of higher education institutions in their regions and their duty as responsible local, as well as national and international agents” (Chatterton and Goddard, 2000; p. 490). Thus, these theoretical developments have served “to strengthen regional ties and reinforce an awareness of a responsibility of universities to be partners in the economic health and wealth of their region” (Allison and Keane, 2001; p. 127), putting the “third role” not only “alongside, but fully integrated with mainstream teaching and research” (Chatterton and Goddard, 2000; p. 475).

As a consequence of this progressive “enlargement” of the role of the university in the dynamics of local development, a corresponding evolution of performance metrics and indicators used to assess the impact of university activities is required. However, the theme of measures and indicators of universities activities is, to a large extent, not yet sufficiently explored (e.g., Urbano and Guerrero, 2013; Mazdeh et al., 2013; Schmitz et al., 2017). Through a bibliometric and then a critical review of the extant literature, the present chapter aims precisely to provide: i) an overall picture of the state-of-art of literature on universities’ missions and roles in regional development; ii) a systematisation of the contributions on performance measures and indicators of universities activities. We finally draw useful insights for future research, highlighting that the empirical assessment of social and cultural impact of the university in a community has been, to date, largely overlooked.
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