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INSTITUTIONALIZING UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: INSIGHTS FROM LEBANESE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

D H MAKKI

DBA

2022

INSTITUTIONALIZING UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: INSIGHTS FROM LEBANESE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study aims to establish a rationale for private universities in Lebanon to invest in university social responsibility (USR) institutionalization as a solution to their multifaceted challenges. The rising global challenges are heightening universities' accountability to contribute to societal welfare, innovation, and economic development. Concurrently, universities have been distracted by focusing on their rankings and finding new sources of income due to constrained public funding and competition. This has widened the gap between universities and their communities, depriving both of the impact of universities' social engagement.

This research grounded in the Stakeholder Theory, adopts a critical realist qualitative approach and thematic analysis to analyze the data collected through twenty-five in-depth interviews with participants representing students, alumni, faculty, staff, and executive officers at the Lebanese American University, selected for its accessibility and relevance.

The study affirms USR's positive impact on enrolment and funding enhancement. Other effects of USR encompass a transformational effect on involved individuals, a better perception of the institution, and a stronger relationship between university and its stakeholders. Tailored communication strategies appear vital to raise USR awareness, and conditional to increase engagement and maximize outcomes. The findings provide a solid argument to drive USR implementation, as a unique opportunity to address major university challenges at once.

This research integrates the 'old' and 'new' literature on universities' social engagement through an extensive review of the various concepts across centuries. It contributes to the USR literature through the newly established relationship among USR, enrolment, and funding enhancement, with awareness as a moderator, in a uniquely challenging national context. It extends the applicability of Stakeholder Theory to higher education, with a focus on its normative aspect, and the feasibility of creating value to all stakeholders without exception. Also, it contributes to practice by motivating a voluntary or policy-driven USR implementation across university functions, building on the inherent base, aligning and synergizing all efforts, and optimizing the available financial and human resources, supported with targeted communication strategies, to maximize outcomes.

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Abbreviations

AASCU	The American Association of State Colleges and Universities
APLU CICEP	Association of Public and Land-grant Universities - Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness, and Economic Prosperity
COVID-19	Coronavirus-19
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EO	Executive Officer
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HERD	Higher Education Regional Development
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
IAU	International Association of Universities
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LAU	Lebanese American University
LU	Lebanese University
MOOC	Massive Open Online Class
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
REF	Research Excellence Framework
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom
USR	University Social Responsibility

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted through the Researcher's submission to Northumbria University's Ethics Online System on May 27, 2020.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 59372 words.

Name: Dania Makki

Date: the 25th of July, 2023

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

University social responsibility (USR) refers to the university's ethical engagement with its community, and its commitment to addressing society's needs through teaching, research, management, and extension activities, to satisfy stakeholders' expectations (Esfijani et al., 2013). USR has become a topical issue with the emergence of global socio-economic and environmental challenges. These strains were coupled with a growing university accountability toward stakeholders (Sørensen et al., 2019), which was accentuated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The expanding literature on USR over the past two decades linked it to enhanced university reputation (Lo et al., 2017), brand image (Plungpongpan et al., 2016), and corporate identity (Atakan & Eker, 2007). Also, many studies established USR as an antecedent of student satisfaction (Vasilescu et al., 2010; Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2020), student-university identification and loyalty (Atakan & Eker, 2007; El-Kassar et al., 2019), as well as a stronger employee commitment (Lo et al., 2017) among others. Despite being depicted as a competitive advantage (Shek, 2019), which is much needed by universities in a highly challenging market with increased accountability, however, universities' attempts to institutionalize USR remain limited.

This research aims to identify a strong rationale for universities to engage in a strategic implementation of USR across their key functions. This chapter will provide an overview about the study starting with the research background, followed by the problem statement, the purpose, the research questions, the rationale and significance, the limitations, and finally the structural outline of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

In Lebanon, the greater percentage of universities are private (currently 34 private and a single public university– [Erasmus$^+$ Lebanon, 2021]), and rely mainly on tuition fees supported by funds, grants, and donations, in the absence of any governmental funding. These sources of revenue can be sensitive to major economic and political changes in a small country shattered by political tensions within an unstable region. In fact, in October 2019, a socio-economic and political crisis burst into national protests, the largest ever in the country's history. A few months later, this was followed by the surge of COVID-19, and then the Beirut blast in August 2020, which escalated the impact of the strike. Devastating financial and economic consequences hit hard across all sectors including education, threatening the survival and the future of higher education institutions (HEIs).

The Lebanese private universities suddenly found themselves drowning under the effect of a severe crisis that consumed their funds instantaneously. The country and its constituents started falling apart. Every one needed help, and lifting each other up was the only solution. Universities couldn't remain still, they had to rescue their key stakeholders and the reason for their existence– the students, and then faculty and staff to ensure the continuity of the university operations. The various initiatives and bold moves exhibited by a few institutions at that time were well perceived by society. The latter did not hesitate to pitch in and support. Large funds were raised for students' financial aid to save their education, and more for medical support in the fight against the pandemic, which prompted many questions: Would developing proximity and a tied relationship with society facilitate the flow of financial support to 'stumbling' universities in times of crises? Would prior social engagement with local communities and a strong interrelationship with the surrounding save the future of a university and ensure its sustainability in challenging times? Such questions stemming from the observation of recently lived experiences reaffirmed the value and merit of the researched topic.

Moreover, having spent thirteen years at a prominent private university in Lebanon, working in different capacities provided huge opportunities for a close collaboration with students, alumni, staff, faculty, and executive officers. Each day-to-day interaction with members from these groups revealed the disparity of their needs, expectations, and perceptions about the institution's role and practices. Not only that, it also portrayed the undeniable deep impact every university initiative, program, or decision, had on each and every one of us–the university stakeholders. Most of the students' needs and expectations revolved around receiving quality education and a memorable campus life experience at low cost or with considerable financial support, and highly-paying jobs post-graduation. Alumni wanted help with securing jobs and more events that keep them engaged with the institution. Staff sought job security and opportunities for growth, in addition to which faculty needed freedom in the pursuit of their interests be it teaching, conducting research, or social engagement. As for executive officers, they expected the community's understanding and support of their decisions and practices as they tried to advance the institution's ranking, boost its competitiveness, and increase its financial resources in the absence of state funding. Over the years, these daily observations created a sense that most of the university efforts are being geared toward positioning itself and securing additional funds to ensure its continuity, while its relationship with its stakeholders has become more extrinsic, more materialistic. This made me question the purpose and roles of universities in building future leaders and advancing nations, how can this happen with the focus drifting toward overcoming competition rather than developing communities? It also

made me wonder, with all the disparities among the internal community's needs and expectations, what would bring all the university constituents together?

It is in this state of questioning and doubting the university's commitment to achieve its mission statement, that I got introduced to the USR concept through a case study for my MBA thesis, which examined its impact on student related outcomes, more specifically student-university identification and loyalty. This was followed by a couple of co-authored publications on USR (two cross-cultural studies and a book chapter). Engaging in research on this topic and diving deep into the literature on USR, made me realize its value to the higher education (HE) landscape in general, and its relevance to Lebanese private universities more specifically. Furthermore, witnessing society's generous response to the universities' bold moves addressing stakeholders' vital needs escalated by the crises that hit Lebanon causing major disruption, emphasized the importance of USR institutionalization. This uniquely challenging context provided a golden opportunity to capture the effect of socially responsible acts, not only on stakeholders' perceptions, but most importantly on the institution's funds, as these constituted a major challenge for long.

1.3 Problem Statement

The recent years have been witnessing a growing commodification of HE, nurtured by universities' practices favouring the 'private good' in their efforts to surmount competition (Enders & Jongbloed, 2007) and secure revenues with the limited, and sometimes absent, state funding. Concurrently, the emerging societal challenges have been compelling more accountability and service to the community, and a renewed commitment to the 'public good' to achieve territorial development (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010; Charles & Benneworth, 2002). This necessitates a paradigm shift not only in universities' practices, but also in their culture, missions, and strategic planning, where USR can serve as a guiding principle for the sought organizational transformation. However, despite numerous study findings in the past decade, which linked USR to a multitude of desirable outcomes emphasizing its value for stakeholders and institutions, it hasn't yet acquired enough momentum to motivate a policy-driven USR implementation, or an increased voluntary USR institutionalization.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

In the unique Lebanese HE landscape dominated by private universities, fully self-funded and fiercely competing to increase their enrolment yields, hence tuition fees' revenues, Lebanese private universities faced an existential challenge due to severe economic, financial, and health

crises, which dissolved their revenues. However, a few universities decided to 'fight for their lives and the lives of others'. They intensified their efforts to help their internal community and to support society to the best of their abilities, using their available resources and enticing the contribution of whoever is able to lend a hand locally and regionally. This support was well perceived and reciprocated by society.

This context propelled the examination of the impact of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement, which if established, will address the financial resources' challenge for universities worldwide. Moreover, after having drifted away from their main roles and missions of educating leaders and developing responsible citizens who will lead the rise of the nation, the emerging COVID-19 pandemic and the Lebanese economic crises offered universities in Lebanon a unique opportunity to re-center their focus on their stakeholders. Addressing their pressing needs and creating value for them are expected to bring the university closer to its community, bridging the widening gap between the institution and its stakeholders through USR. This will support presenting USR as a multifaceted solution to major university challenges.

This drove the purpose of the study, which is enticing Lebanese private universities to implement USR across teaching, research, extension activities, and management. Will the institutionalization of USR solicit more funds through better enrolment rates, more generous donations, and larger grants, as universities exhibit social responsibility and contribute to the welfare of society?

1.5 Research Questions

The aim of this study is to establish a strong rationale for Lebanese private universities to motivate USR institutionalization, which inspired the main research question:

RQ1: *Why would Lebanese private universities invest in USR implementation?*

Addressing this question required showcasing the value of USR to universities, not only in terms of how much it aligns with the university roles and missions, but more importantly, how USR can contribute to overcoming university challenges. In Lebanon, with the full reliance on self-generated income at a time of extremely constrained funds, establishing a positive relationship between USR and funding appeared the most rational, especially that the growing literature on USR has not yet tapped into this area. Hence the second research question:

RQ2: *How does USR impact enrolment and funding?*

Since USR is about university's social engagement and accountability toward stakeholders, grounding the study in Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1983) according to which organizations' success is measured not only by profit, but also by the value they bring to their stakeholders, motivated the search for potential effects of USR practices, which led to the third research question:
RQ3: *What could be other effects/consequences of USR practices?*

The fourth research question stemmed from the literature on USR that highlighted the importance of communication strategies to increase stakeholders' engagement in the universities' socially responsible programs, activities, and events:
RQ4: *What is the role of awareness and value sharing in the USR context?*

As for the fifth research question, the findings of previous USR studies, which connected it to various student and organizational related outcomes within a theoretical framework based on the Stakeholder Theory, revealed that accounting for stakeholders' needs within universities yields positive outcomes. Since USR practices are expected to address challenges faced by university stakeholders including society, it was worth questioning:
RQ5: *How can USR drive universities' response to emerging challenges?*

Answering these research questions would serve two main objectives:

1) Shedding light on the growing value of USR, especially at times of crises.
2) The relevance of USR to overcome the multifaceted challenges that universities and their stakeholders are facing, especially at crucial times.

1.6 Research Design Overview

The complexity of the current topic, which stems from multilayered relationships between universities and their constituents, inspired a critical realist approach to allow a deeper understanding of the reality and the tensions governing these relationships based on individuals' experiences, which would enrich the developed theoretical perspective. This seemed vital to establish common ground between universities and their stakeholders, reducing the widening gap caused by diverging needs and expectations. Applying a qualitative retroductive approach, which provides an opportunity to uncover overlooked or unforeseen perspectives (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018), appeared suitable to identify patterns in the complex relationships between the university and its diverse groups of stakeholders, within various contexts, for a chance to pinpoint any underlying causality.

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which relies on exploratory semi-structured interviews for data collection through purposive sampling at the Lebanese American University. The choice of this private university was based on ease of accessibility being a staff member at that time, as well as on the relevance of this institution, which led major socially responsible initiatives. Twenty-five interviewees represented different groups of stakeholders including students, alumni, executive officers, faculty, and staff. Preference was given to academic and non-academic staff who worked in a capacity involved directly or indirectly in socially responsible activities and programs. The abundance and richness of the collected data necessitated the use of NVivo 12 software for data organization and management. The ordered data was transferred into a table to facilitate visual representation and extraction of first and second order themes, and aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013; Gioia, 2021). This was followed by a thematic analysis of the data to generate the findings, and offer theoretical and practical contributions.

Yet, this research has some limitations related mainly to its specific context, sample size, and adopted methods. Data collection from stakeholders within a single institution, at a critical time during a global pandemic impacted the timely access to participants limiting the number of interviews. Also, the adoption of a qualitative approach did not enable the generalizability of the results despite the richness and value of the findings. However, this study offers further directions for future research about USR and universities' social engagement with their communities.

1.7 Rationale and Significance

In the past couple of years, the socio-economic, political, and financial conditions in Lebanon have been deteriorating, until the country hit rock bottom and became bankrupt, with a 90% devaluation of the local currency and a triple digit inflation rate. This crisis was amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had detrimental effects on society. In this scenario, universities, which represent a vital component of the societal fabric, were compelled to support and leverage local communities. Their contribution became an obligation rather than a choice. Yet, these universities were similarly affected by the crises and were struggling to sustain, as they rely solely on self-generated revenues in the absence of any state funding. This is why establishing a positive relationship between USR and funding enhancement will provide a strong motive for Lebanese private universities to institutionalize USR, as this will help them overcome a global challenge for universities: 'funding'.

The research findings are expected to motivate all university constituents to align and synergize their efforts, while it guides their steps through the USR implementation process in order to

maximize the generated results, helping the university become a self-sustained thriving institution with satisfied stakeholders.

1.8 Thesis Structure

This study is organized into seven chapters starting with an introductory **Chapter one**, which offers an overview about the background and motivation for the study, the research questions, the research design, rationale, significance, and structural outline.

Chapter two sets the stage by providing a contextual framework for the study. It portrays the current situation in Lebanon and the emerging economic and health crises, which marked their prints on the HE landscape. This chapter pinpoints the particularities of the Lebanese HE sector, in specific the loose governance system, the lack of quality assurance, and the absence of any governmental support or funding, the latter being limited to the sole public university in the country. In addition, it offers a background about the Lebanese American University (LAU), validating its relevance and justifying its choice for the data collection.

Chapter three provides an extensive review of the literature on universities' social engagement starting with a brief about universities' evolution, purpose, roles, and challenges as the latter affects their management and marketing strategies significantly. This will be followed by an overview of the various concepts revolving around universities' connection with their host environments (Land-grant university, the Civic university, the Scholarship of Engagement, the Triple and Quadruple Helices, Regional Innovation Systems, the New Knowledge Production (Mode 2), the Entrepreneurial University, Anchor Institutions, and the Stewardship of Place). These reflect the long-standing interconnectedness between universities and society, a relationship clearly denoted in USR as a new notion for universities' social engagement. Literature on this concept associated it with positive institutional and stakeholders' related outcomes, and supported the assumption of a positive effect of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement, based on the Stakeholder Theory.

Chapter four presents the research methodology, starting with the ontological and epistemological stances, which shape the research design and define the choice of methods. Also, it provides a detailed description of the interviewing process including the interview guide development, sampling, data collection, and data management using NVivo 12 software. This is followed by an extensive overview of the analysis process leading to the research findings. This chapter concludes with a section on ethical considerations.

Chapter five presents the key findings and themes emerging from the twenty-five in-depth interviews. These are illustrated extensively throughout the sections of this lengthy chapter, supported by numerous quotes, and linked to the relevant literature in preparation for the discussion chapter.

Chapter six provides a discussion and interpretation of the key themes generated from the interview findings, in order to address the research questions guiding this study. The themes are discussed in connection with the literature, within the adopted theoretical framework.

The study concludes with **Chapter seven**, which offers a brief summary of the study and its key findings, drawing upon these the contributions of this research to theory and practice. This is followed by noted limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: The Context

2.1 The Country: LEBANON

Lebanon, a small country extending over 10,452 Km^2 in Western Asia on the Mediterranean Sea with an estimated population of 6.769 million (UNdata, 2021), has long enjoyed an advanced economic and cultural place in the region. Its strategic geographic location linking the east with the west, and its liberal economic system promoting trade and foreign investments, made it one of the region's banking and trade centers. Its economy relied mainly on the banking, tourism, and healthcare services (Abou Jaoude, 2015). The country was also known to have one of the most highly educated populations in the Middle East (Hasrouny & Zeaiter, 2010). Its high-quality education system has been an attraction for elite Lebanese and Arab youth prior to the Civil War (1975-1990).

Around two decades of civil war, sectarianism, and regional political instability, have deeply damaged the country's economic infrastructure and have set the ground for an economic crisis, which exploded in October 2019. The World Bank overview of Lebanon in October 2021 highlighted the compounded crises that the country has been undergoing for almost two years. It noted the brutal decrease in GDP from "*about US$55 billion in 2018 to a projected US$20.5 billion in 2021*" (World Bank, October 17, 2021), the three-digit inflation rate, the rise of poverty and unemployment, and the shortage in essential services. This placed Lebanon's economic crisis among the top 10 globally and portrayed it as "*one of the most severe global crises episodes*" according to the World Bank Lebanon Economic Monitor in its Spring 2021 edition (World Bank, June 2021).

Topped by the COVID-19 pandemic, the repercussions of Beirut blast on August 4, 2020, which was described as "*the most powerful non-nuclear explosion of the 21st century*" (Rincon, BBC News, October 2020), the depletion of national resources and foreign exchange reserves, in addition to the government's inertia, the situation in Lebanon could not have been worse. The human capital and skilled work force have had no choice but to emigrate and escape the sinking ship, while the educational system which is relied on to build nations, appeared in 'agony' with the sudden contraction of its main resources: financial and human assets.

2.2 Higher Education in Lebanon

For decades, the higher education system in Lebanon was considered among the best in the Middle East. Its reputation stemmed from the legacy of its institutions founded by western missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th century, such as the American University of Beirut (1866), Saint Joseph University (1875), and the Lebanese American University (1924), which made it an attraction for students from around the region (The Muhanna Foundation, 2010). However, with the civil war, the government mismanagement of the higher education landscape, and the emerging crises, this reputation has been waning.

The Lebanese HE sector consists of three types of institutions: university, college, and higher vocational institute (MERIC-Net, 2019). This study will only address universities, which are institutions with "*at least 3 faculties each specialised in one of the main study fields that are recognised by international bodies including the UNESCO and deliver programmes of at least nine specialties leading to a first cycle degree (Bachelor's degree)*" (MERIC-Net, 2019, p.11). Currently, there are 34 private universities and one public university, which are culturally diverse and follow different educational systems: Anglophone, Francophone, Arabic, Islamic, or a mixture of these according to their cultural roots, language of instruction, or religious affiliation. This diversity contributed to limiting academic mobility and collaboration among institutions (Erasmus+ Lebanon, 2006).

The sole public university in the country was established in 1951 under the name of the 'Lebanese University' (LU, n.d.) and was a Francophone institution as a result of the French mandate. In the 1960s, most of its Humanities programs were taught in Arabic, while today many branches have adopted French and English in the delivery of their curricula (Erasmus+ Lebanon, 2006). LU started with three faculties, then grew into the largest in the country with 19 faculties and institutes, 3 doctoral schools, and 76 branches (Table 1) across the eight governorates (administrative divisions) of Lebanon: Akkar, Baalbeck-Hermel, North Lebanon, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Nabatiyeh, and South Lebanon (Figure 1) (LU, n.d.).

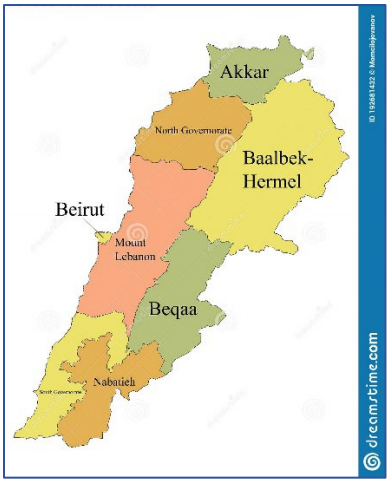


Figure 1. Lebanon governorates (Momcilojovanov, 2020)

The geographically spread branches of LU faculties as presented in Table 1 below, were founded to serve the zones created by the war. They were reigned by warlords of these zones and they preserved the representation and dominance of the political parties prevailing in these areas to date.

Table 1. Geographical distribution of the Lebanese University faculties across governorates.

Faculties of the Lebanese University	Akkar	Hermel	Bekaa	North Lebanon	Mount Lebanon	Beirut	Nabatieh	South Lebanon
Faculty of Public Health			1	1	3			1
Faculty of Agronomy					1			
Faculty of Pharmacy					1			
Faculty of Medical Sciences					1			
Faculty of Engineering				1	2			
Faculty of Science	1	1	1	1	4		2	1
Faculty of Dental Medicine					1			
Faculty of Technology					1			1
Higher Institute of Applied Economic Sciences						1		
Faculty of Pedagogy					1	1		
Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture				2	3			
Faculty of Law and Political and Administrative Sciences			1	1	3			
Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences			1	1	2	2		1
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management					1	1		1
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration				1	2	1	2	
Institute of Social Sciences			1	1	1	1		1
Faculty of Information					1	1		
Doctoral School of Law, Political, Administrative and Economic Sciences					1			
Doctoral School of Literature, Humanities & Social Sciences					1			
Doctoral School of Science and Technology					1			
	1	1	5	9	31	8	4	6

Obviously, the HE sector is dominated by private universities, which constitute the focus of this research. An updated list of private universities in Lebanon presented in Table 2, has been developed based on the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE, n.d.), Erasmus^{+} Lebanon (2021), and respective universities' websites. It is worth noting the challenges to confirm the information included in this table for the following reasons:

- The list of universities on MEHE's website was outdated and missing many recent private universities.
- The links included in Erasmus^{+} Lebanon report 2017 and MERIC-Net 2019 referring to the list of private universities were broken.
- Many universities did not have websites but Facebook pages only.
- The search for the establishment date of several institutions returned inconsistent dates.
- Most universities either did not list their tuition fees on their websites, or they provided it in the Lebanese currency without equivalence in US dollars, which makes including it in Table 2 misleading due to the multiple exchange rates resulting from the financial crisis in Lebanon.

Table 2. The Lebanese private universities.

Universities in Lebanon (34 private and 1 public)	**Establishment Year**	**Enrollment 2018-2019**	**Tuition fees per credit in USD**	**Number of campuses per governorate**							
				Akkar	**Hermel**	**Bekaa**	**North Lebanon**	**Mount Lebanon**	**Beirut**	**Nabatieh**	**South Lebanon**
American University of Beirut (AUB)	1866	8,505	753-892						1		
University of Sagesse	1875	3,456							1		
Saint Joseph University (USJ)	1875	10,512							5		
Lebanese American University (LAU)	1924	8,409	510-854					1	1		
Haigazian University	1955	621							1		
Beirut Arab University (BAU)	1960	9,490				1	1	1	1		
Holy Spirit University (USEK)	1962	7,785	137-442			1	1	1		1	
Makassed University	1986	248							1		
Tripoli University Institute for Islamic Studies	1986	1,174					1				
Notre Dame University - Louaize (NDU)	1987	5,482	380-440				1	2			
Jinan University (JN)	1988	1,858	30-135				1				1
University of Balamand	1988	5,213		1			1	1	2		
Manar University of Tripoli or City University	1990	697					1				
Global University (GU)	1992	565	100-275					1	1		
American University of Science & Technology (AUST)	1994	4,107	220			1			1		1
Lebanese French University of Technology and Applied Sciences	1996	1,093					2	1	1		
Antonin University (UA)	1996	3,797				1	1	1			
Islamic University of Lebanon	1996	5,441			1			2			1
American University of Technology (AUT)	1998	1,370	220	1			1	1			1
Arts, Sciences & Technology University in Lebanon	1998	4,699				1	1	4	1		
Hariri Canadian University	1999	775						1			
Al-Kafaat University Institute	1999	805						1			
Lebanese Canadian University (LCU)	2000	1,274						1			
Modern University for Business & Science (MUBS)	2000	1,587				1		4	1		
Middle East University (MEU)	2001	137							1		
Lebanese International University (LIU)	2001	33,200		1		2	1	1	1	1	2
Arab Open University (AOU)	2002	2,352	85-100				1	1	1		
Lebanese German University (LGU)	2008	612	135-145					1			
University of Sciences & Arts in Lebanon (USAL)	2009	638									
American University of Culture & Education (AUCE)	2009	1,613					1	2	1	1	1
Al Maaref University (MU)	2011	708	35-150						1		
Phoenicia University (PU)	2012	1,054	180-220								
Azm University	2015	363									
Holy Family University	2016	622	175-190				1				
Total Student Enrollment at Lebanese Private Universities		**130,262**		**3**	**1**	**8**	**16**	**28**	**23**	**3**	**7**
LEBANESE UNIVERSITY (public)	1951	**81,024**		**1**	**1**	**5**	**9**	**31**	**7**	**4**	**6**

Table 2 shows that the handful of reputable institutions established prior to the civil war, increased in numbers haphazardly in the past two decades. Two thirds of these universities were established after 1990, ten of them between 1990-1999, followed by twelve between 2000-2016.
The enrolment numbers for the academic year 2018-2019 retrieved from the Erasmus$^+$ Lebanon website (n.d.) provide insights on the size of each institution. The largest by far is LIU with 33,000$^+$ students, which is more than 40% of the student body in the private sector. It is followed by eight large universities hosting 5,000$^+$ to 10,000$^+$ students, most of which are among the oldest in the country such as NDU, BAU, LAU, AUB, and USJ. Medium institutions enrol 1,000$^+$ to 4,000 students. The rest are small universities, hosting as little as 140 or 240 students up to 800 such as MEU, Makassed University, and Al-Kafaat University respectively. Furthermore, the total number of students in private universities (130,262 students) affirms that these institutions host more than 60% of the student body while the rest are enrolled in the public university (Erasmus$^+$ Lebanon, 2017).

Table 2 also highlights inequality in the geographic distribution of private universities across governorates. Around 60% of private universities' campuses are based in Beirut and neighbouring Mount Lebanon. This reduces the access to quality education especially for students in rural areas, and compels student mobility toward these two governorates for those who can afford it.

As for the average tuition fees per credit (in US dollars) compiled from universities' websites, a considerable number of institutions either kept their tuition fees undisclosed or listed it only in local currency without its equivalence in USD. Having several USD exchange rates in the country as a result of the economic crisis, it was not possible to convert the tuition fees in LBP to USD or vice versa, in an attempt to unify the currency and complete the table. Therefore, only tuition fees provided in USD on universities' websites were included. Although incomplete, the available data shows considerable differences between low cost/affordable institutions such as JU, AOU, MU and their respective fees per credit ranging from 30$ to 150$, versus the most expensive and reputable universities such as AUB, LAU, and NDU with the credit charged a minimum of 380$ up to 892$. Accordingly, for a 3-year bachelor degree program with a minimum of 92 credits to graduate, the cost varies from (2,760$ - 13,800$) at a low cost or affordable university and reaches (34,960$ - 82,064$) at one of the top universities in Lebanon. This reveals the diversity of the HE system considering the cost of private education in the country. In addition, it highlights a large gap in income among private universities, which do not receive any public funding and rely substantially on tuition fees and other sources such as donations, endowments, and gifts (MERIC-Net, 2019).

The direct public funding, which is as low as 0.5% of the GDP and lower than the average levels of OECD countries and middle-income countries, is distributed over the Lebanese University, MEHE, and the National Council for Scientific Research (Erasmus$^+$ Lebanon, 2017). Surprisingly, the sector kept witnessing the emergence of private universities despite the projected modest revenues considering their limited capacities, low enrolment and tuition fees.

The loose governance structure (Nahas, 2009), the absence of national strategies, and the fruitless efforts to set quality assurance standards, not only led to the 'mushrooming' of small private universities (The Muhanna Foundation, 2010), and the adoption of business practices in university management, but also reinforced the commercialization of HE at the expense of quality. Even worse, it tempted several low-level institutions to engage in selling forged degrees to non-university students in Lebanon (Rose, 2019) and the region. The most recent incident involved hundreds of Master's and Doctorate degrees sold to high-ranking Iraqi officials for a cost between USD 5,000 and 10,000 (Al-Arabiya English, November 2021). Such detrimental scandals have been tarnishing the reputation and breaking the trust in the quality of HE in Lebanon.

On the other hand, the absence of labour market data has expanded the gap between academia and the job market, preventing institutions from identifying the job market needs and trends to update their programs accordingly, and to equip their graduates with tailored professional development, ensuring their career readiness (The Muhanna Foundation, 2010). Several Tempus projects directed toward employability, enhancing university-industry collaboration, and aligning graduates' skills with the labour market needs, have been challenged by the political context, which incapacitated the implementation of national strategies and plans for reform (Erasmus$^+$ Lebanon, 2021). In the absence of accountability and transparency, which are usually reinforced by national policies, the high cost of education at private institutions has been questioned (The Muhanna Foundation, 2010), as universities kept graduating largely unemployable human capital, which pushed the educated and skilled youth toward emigration.

However, the most threatening challenges of all time, have been the emerging health, economic, and financial crises toward the end of 2019, which altogether made it difficult –even for the most well-established institutions–to sustain the meltdown. Universities in Lebanon did not escape the effect of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has deeply impacted the HE landscape worldwide. The sudden shift toward a remote delivery of services not only disrupted the university operations and research activities, but also widened the gap among institutions according to their readiness

and responsiveness. With the required infrastructure, equipment, and users' competence (be it faculty, staff, or students), which only few universities could afford, most of the institutions struggled to adjust and provide an acceptable quality education, especially with unreliable internet, in the absence of electricity and limited access to fuel at very high cost.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been compounded by the worst economic crisis in the history of the country, manifested in a high currency devaluation, soaring inflation, informal capital control with limited bank withdrawals, shortage of electricity, fuel, medication and medical equipment, rising poverty, immigration, and much more. The crises' repercussions have shattered the remainder of the HE sector and left it in despair. The shrunk value of tuition fees–although adjusted to less than 10% of the real market value–reduced considerably the main income for private universities, resulting in their inability to cover their operational costs. They had to compromise a lot of expenses including faculty and staff salaries that retracted by 90% due to the currency devaluation. One of the prominent private universities even laid off 850 staff in 2020, which led elite faculty and qualified staff from diverse institutions to relocate abroad for a decent quality of life (University World News, September 2021). This was a huge loss with a heavy toll on the quality of educational services at private universities. Simultaneously, students and their parents struggled to settle the tuition fees and faced dropouts or transition to lower level less costly universities, despite increased financial aid support by many top institutions (Eddé, 2020). While wealthy families opted to transfer their children to universities abroad to escape such 'unhealthy' environment, especially with the undermined quality of education.

Consequently, universities have been operating on "*a survival mode…We cannot contemplate another year of this upheaval… Without the generosity and support of our friends, we cannot survive (much) longer*", stated the Media and Public Relations office at the Lebanese American University in their email to the University World News (September 2021). This statement is a genuine expression of the critical condition of the HE sector, portrayed by one of the most well established private universities in Lebanon.

2.3 The Lebanese American University

The Lebanese American University (LAU), one of the reputable private HEIs in Lebanon and the region, constitutes a great example to examine the impact of USR on funding enhancement. This institution, which is a nonsectarian and not-for-profit private university, has roots back to 1835 when the Presbyterian missionaries founded the first American School for Girls (ASG) in Beirut to

decrease illiteracy among girls. In 1924, it became a two-year junior college for women, until the 1950 when the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York authorized this college for women to confer four-year bachelor of arts degrees, and later in 1955 bachelor of science degrees. In 1970, when its bachelor degrees were recognized by the Lebanese government, it started enrolling men in some programs and changed its name to "Beirut University College" in 1973. It kept growing and expanding until it became the 'Lebanese American University' in 1994 (LAU, n.d.).

Today, LAU hosts 8,000^{+} students in its campuses in Beirut (55%) and Byblos (45%) distributed among its seven schools: School of Arts & Sciences, School of Business, School of Engineering, School of Architecture & Design, School of Pharmacy, School of Medicine, and School of Nursing represented in Table 3 (LAU, Fall 2022).

Table 3. LAU percentage of enrolment by school (Fall 2022)

Enrollment by School – Fall 2022		
School of Arts & Sciences	3,126	38%
Adnan Kassar School of Business	2,271	27.6%
School of Engineering	1,251	15.2%
School of Architecture and Design	609	7.4%
School of Pharmacy	440	5.3%
Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chaghoury School of Medicine	236	2.9%
Alice Ramez Chaghoury School of Nursing	210	2.6%
No college Designated	85	1%
Total	**8,228**	

This comprehensive university offers around 70 undergraduate and graduate programs, many of which have been accredited by reputable international agencies, in addition to the institutional accreditation by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) and several schools' accreditations. Among these are the NASAD accreditation for the School of Architecture & Design, AACSB for the Adnan Kassar School of Business, ABET for the School of Engineering, NAAB accreditation for the bachelor of Architecture, CCNE for the BS in Nursing, and ACPE for the Doctor of Pharmacy program, the one and only outside of the United States (LAU, n.d.). The growth of the student body and the expansion of academic programs especially in Pharmacy, Medicine, and Nursing were coupled with the acquisition of the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital (2009), a headquarters and academic center in New York (2013), and an Executive Center in Beirut Central District (LAU, n.d.).

Moreover, LAU's quality of education and reputation have been recognized nationally and regionally. The university ranked second in Lebanon according to the *THE* World University

Rankings 2022, *THE* Arab University Rankings 2021, and QS Graduate Employability Rankings 2020. It was fourth nationally according to QS World University Rankings 2021, and first in Business and Economics as per *THE* World University Rankings by Subject 2022. Moreover, its Petroleum Engineering Program ranked first in Lebanon and made it to the top 100-150 worldwide in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2021 (LAU, n.d.). This reputation reflected LAU's determination to fulfil its mission and commitment to "*academic excellence, student centeredness, civic engagement, the advancement of scholarship, the education of the whole person, and the formation of leaders in a diverse world*" (LAU, n.d.). Its vision and values of academic excellence, equity, diversity, inclusiveness, integrity, leadership, and citizenship were more than notions on paper, they have been translated through actual practices (Makki, 2018). A case study about social responsibility at this specific university revealed a plethora of socially responsible activities performed intuitively and sporadically by many internal stakeholders across various departments using minimal resources (Makki, 2018).

With the economic, financial, and health crises that hit the country end of 2019, LAU has once again reaffirmed its social engagement and strong commitment to living up to its mission, vision and values, which have been mirrored through exemplary bold moves undertaken to support the community. LAU increased students' financial aid considerably to prevent any student from dropping out and losing their education for financial reasons. It also provided temporary relief packages for faculty and staff, instead of salary cuts or laying off staff as some other institutions did to face the shortage of funds. Furthermore, it supported society at large following the August 4 Beirut Blast through fundraising and volunteerism by the university community, as well as medical care services through its hospital. It also contributed tremendously to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic through the mobile clinic free PCR testing in remote areas, followed by vaccination campaigns for its students, faculty, staff, alumni, and society. LAU has largely expanded its support for its key stakeholders in an attempt to alleviate the burden of the crises to the best it could, and it has been communicating its efforts publicly. The community's response has been remarkably impressive by giving back and providing financial support not only for youth education in terms of financial aid, but also for various socially responsible initiatives related to the pandemic among others.

It is worth noting that many of these community support acts were launched with minimal to no funding, just relying on available resources and soliciting sponsors, proving that universities' ability to practice social responsibility does not always require large investments and finances.

Additionally, most universities have socially responsible activities, which go unnoticed being done spontaneously, without any promotion, as they are not part of the university strategic planning, although USR appears a genuine extension of universities' mission to build the nation.

In normal circumstances, countries rely on HEIs not only to build future leaders and sustainable societies, but also to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. For that, they set national strategies and develop policies that support the HE sector and ensure its advancement, which has been lacking in Lebanon due to the constant unstable political climate. The scarce resources and capacities of a considerable number of small to medium private universities led to channeling their focus on their primary role of education —with questioned quality in many cases. Even the public university, which is the only one funded by the government, it has constantly suffered from limited resources, most of which were geared to sustain the quality of education and a decent research portfolio that secures national and international rankings for the Lebanese University. That being said, not only rural areas, but also host environments have been deprived from universities' contribution to regional development, be it the small universities with limited resources or the Lebanese University with its branches across the country. It is a missed opportunity for any university to practice its role only partially.

Nowadays, as the country is collapsing and the HE sector is left to its fate, the reputable Lebanese private universities, which were once an attraction in the region, are facing an existential crisis. Their main source of income has become negligible compared to their heightened costs, with the absence of any governmental support. Besides their endowment, their only hope to sustain rests on donations. So, what would solicit people to offer generous donations to private universities?

This chapter provided a contextual framework for the study through an overview about Lebanon and its current situation, the status of the HE system in the country and its particularities, as well as main highlights about the Lebanese American University, to validate its relevance as a place of choice to collect data and conduct the research. The next chapter will present an extensive review of the literature on universities' social engagement through an overview of various notions and different forms of relationship between universities and their surroundings.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Although universities' contributions to their communities were long-established across centuries, the recent years have been witnessing a heightened interest of universities to engage with their host environment, and a pressure driven by growing accountability toward stakeholders in the midst of rising global challenges.

This chapter will present an extensive review of the literature on university social engagement and its interconnectedness with USR, which is the main topic of this study, and will be divided into five main sections. The first section on the purpose and roles of universities starts with a brief background on the evolution of universities throughout centuries, their purpose, and their diverse roles (economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental). The second section discusses the main challenges that face universities from massification, to ICT development, globalization, funding constraints, and the market forces. Getting insights about these factors is crucial to understand the issues that universities need to account for and address in their practices, as well as the scope of their expected contributions, as these elements will define considerably their management and marketing strategies. The following section dives into the literature on universities' social engagement. It portrays different concepts revolving around universities' connection with their surroundings, and their relationships with the various constituents of society, before linking it to USR in the fourth section. This part introduces the concept of USR, its value, practices, and measurement tools. Then it displays the research findings, which link USR to positive institutional and stakeholders' related outcomes, with a special attention to the importance of the communication and marketing strategies relevant to USR. The fifth section connects the literature on social engagement with the social responsibility literature. This bridges the gap between both literatures and reveals the inherent social responsibility base that universities possess and should invest in expanding, to fulfil their stakeholders' expectations, overcome challenges, and reap positive outcomes. The chapter concludes with a typology of USR developed based on a selection of examples of USR institutionalization from universities in developed countries such as the US, UK, and Japan, which will be assessed in the context of LAU's implementation of USR.

3.2 The Purpose and Roles of the University

The relationship between universities and their surroundings dates back to the establishment of these institutions, many of which were originally founded for the local labour force, before growing into the 'universities of today' with their regional and global dimensions (Goddard et al., 1994). This old-standing interrelationship has been much debated (Pinheiro et al., 2015). Universities were long regarded as ivory towers (Goransson & Brundenius, 2011), "*detached from the community*" (Chatterton, 2000, p.166), and "*set apart from the marketplace*" (Bok, 2009, p.5). Their role was mainly associated with knowledge creation and dissemination (Breton & Lambert, 2004) through research and scholarship, with a significant margin of institutional autonomy reinforced by national higher education policies. With the growing demand on higher education and the imprint of education and research on people's lives, universities could not "*maintain an aloof position from society, nor is it desirable for the good of the universities and the pursuit of knowledge"* (Charles, 2007, p.18). This interaction evolved as universities became more ingrained in society (Goransson & Brundenius, 2011).

A renewed interest in further exploring this relationship (Elliot et al., 1996; Goddard et al., 1994) appeared with the growing complexity in the university roles and multifaceted interaction with society. A complexity stemming from the combination of its functions and the pressures practiced by the hosting environment, leading universities to undergo a transformation along their management of the wider changes in their surroundings (Castells, 2001).

3.2.1 Historical Background of Universities

Traditionally, medieval universities in Europe rose out of the need to educate the reigning elite including the church and military leaders (Perkin, 2007). Many of these universities developed from cathedral schools and were influenced by religion. As of the 12th century, universities survived the chaos and the power struggle among the church, the state, and all authority layers in between them. They grew into adaptable institutions able to adjust to almost any fabric of society, which enabled their survival and their global migration (Perkin, 2007). Old universities especially in Germany were revived and new forms of academic institutions combining scholarship and research appeared as a delayed, yet well-adapted response to the society's needs emerging from the Industrial Revolution. New natural and social sciences came into the medieval curricula that focused on arts, theology, medicine, and law. These western university models spread to other countries within and outside Europe, reaching the United States and Japan (Perkin, 2007). During

this period, universities were still associated with the governing elite and had limited functions with a minor role in their societies (Collini, 2017).

Post-World War II, universities went through another transformation gaining a larger visibility and becoming a vital constituent of the post-industrial societal fabric. Scientific research contributed to the advancement of agriculture and manufacturing, and more people headed toward service industries, which augmented the need for a more specialized and highly skilled human capital. The period between 1945 and 1975 witnessed an unprecedented expansion of higher education and research with a shift from elite to mass higher education. The soaring demand for higher education attracted governmental funding for scientific research, which grew the size and role of universities (Collini, 2017). Concurrently, universities' costs increased as well as their dependence on public and corporate funding resources, putting at risk the academic freedom and autonomy that they long enjoyed when they were smaller in number and size (Collini, 2017; Dunne, 2006; Perkin, 2007).

In the last three decades, with the growing demand for professional training and applied sciences, and the rise of public accountability that reduced institutions' autonomy, universities underwent an alteration to adjust to the modern societies' needs. They became agents of economic growth, as they aligned with the commercial businesses' demands and evaluated their success through their customers' satisfaction in a competitive market. Moreover, the academics who used to set the tone of these institutions lost their authority for a management team that applies business plans, with income generating objectives at the core, and key performance indicators to assess universities' outcomes (Collini, 2017; Marginson, 2000).

While in the Islamic/Arab world, the 'madrasa' represented the pillar of higher learning institutions in the 7th century. It specialized in religious sciences with a focus on Islamic law and Arabic literature. Among the oldest madrasas that turned into universities, are Ez-Zitouna (737) in Tunisia, Al-Qarawiyyin (859) in Morocco, and Azhar (972) in Cairo. From the 9th century until almost the 19th century, various scientific fields flourished in the Arab countries and their advancements were translated into Latin, which facilitated their spreading to Europe (Herrera, 2007). Following the Industrial Revolution and the rise of Europe as a global force, the Ottoman leaders started seeking to modernize their institutions, which led to the emergence of westernized models of learning institutions. This has been reinforced by the colonialism, which contributed to spreading the western language and culture to many countries including the Arab World (Schwartzman, 1992).

The university today has developed into an industry by itself, with a culture marked by an over-reliance on technology, constant quantification through "*performance indicators, input-outputs ratios and unit costs*", and a surge of empty key terms such as "*excellence, high-performance, competitive, world-class*" (Dunne, 2006, p.415-416). The emergence of the 'Enterprise university' pressured traditional institutions and pushed toward a commodification of higher education and consumerization of students (Marginson, 2000). It threatened the quality of education, exposed the power and tenure of academics, and ruled the research direction by linking it to corporate goals, which, according to Moore (1997) is leading to splitting the longstanding ties between research and teaching.

The university's evolution across history and the shift in its purposes and roles have been a reflection and response to the socio-economic and political changes in their local, regional, and global surroundings, revealing their flexibility and adaptability to survive and adjust to the varying needs in countries worldwide.

3.2.2 The Purpose of the University

Alongside the university transformation, its purpose and roles have been continually debated (Collini, 2012). With higher education remaining elitist until the 20th century (Perkin, 2007), universities were regarded as 'ivory towers' and their studies were claimed irrelevant, useless, and not serving the society's needs effectively (Collini, 2012).

John Henry Newman, one of the influential authors in the debates about the purpose and nature of universities, advocated for liberal education (Tierney, 2016), considered specialized learning as narrow knowledge, and emphasized the centrality of theology in the education process "*Religious Truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge*" (Newman, 1888, p.65). In his book 'The Idea of a University' (1852) that remains a 'point of reference' to date (Collini, 2012), Newman presented the main purpose of university in developing one's intellect as follows:

> "*A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom…. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. This is the main purpose of a University in its treatment of its students*" (Newman, 1888, p.89).

He eloquently portrayed the university as a place to shape the whole person, creating an idealized community:

> "*University training… aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life…"* (Newman, 1888, p.145).

For Newman, the university's role is to provide a place for students' exchange and communication resulting in self-education and real learning that surpasses the knowledge acquired through teachers. He denied the role of academics and the value of their substantive knowledge by declaring "*when a multitude of young men…come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn one from another, even if there be no one to teach them*" (Newman, 1919, p.146). Moreover, Newman did not seem concerned about accessibility to university education that, at his time, was limited to male elite, while the marginalized majority of artisans, servants, and women executed the manufacturing work (Dunne, 2006, p.413). Despite his promotion of diverse thoughts, his constant usage of male pronouns was translated as an implied exclusion of "*women from his vision of university life*", making Newman's ideal "*seem high-class and gender-bound*" (Collini, 2012, p.58).

His themes impacted higher education and echoed in the work of many scholars of the twentieth century (Pribek, 2004). Educators that believe in the holistic education of the individual and value critical thinking, refer to his concept of liberal education (Christie, 2011). Newman's book '*The Idea of a University*' also continues to resonate with readers through the existence of around nineteen versions with translations into French, German, Italian, Spanish, and other European languages (Barr, 2015). Numerous authors scrutinized Newman's work, assessed its limitations, and its relevance to the modern university (Dunne, 2006). His lecture series promoted the idea that university education should create generalists whose mind is trained/developed to master any topic and to handle various positions (Anderson, 2010), which contradicts with utilitarian views (Locke, 1847; Mill, 1859). Moreover, many scholars denoted the differing educational needs today compared to Newman's days. They questioned the applicability of the broad knowledge that he supported and its ability to serve economic goals, with the gradual shift toward a more utilitarian and democratic discourse (Dunne, 2006; Lanford, 2019). Collini (2012) expressed his astonishment as to how and why Newman's works attained and sustained prominence to date, especially that it promotes an idealized view of the community and a contentless ideal character produced through liberal education with theology at its core, at a time when only elite had access to university education in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In his opinion, although Newman's *Idea* is

far from portraying the 21st century universities, it outlived due to its powerful voice, rhetorical performance, eloquent and ceremonial writing style. In this respect, Jaroslav Pelikan (1992, p.9) described Newman's work as "*the most important treatise on the idea of the university ever written in any language*"; while Frank Turner (1996, p.282) stated "*No work in the English language has had more influence on the public ideals of higher education*".

Another view on the purpose of university was expressed by Ronald Barnett—a leading researcher on the philosophy and the future of higher education. He discussed the internally generated and external crises that universities are going through. Within the institution, a crisis over "*the purposes, status, and criteria of what passes for knowledge*" (Barnett & Griffin, 1997, p.167) has been developing, with a loss of trust in the fundamental beliefs around university. A discontent denoted by the emergence of philosophical views and movements such as relativism, post-structuralism and post-modernism, which exposed the academic thought. Externally, factors such as the marketization of higher education submitted universities to internal and external market forces, whereby students became regarded as 'customers' who purchase courses, which are being promoted like products. Adding to that, the rise of knowledge Mode 2 (Gibbons et al., 1994) besides the traditional knowledge Mode 1 (Barnet & Griffin, 1997). This new form of knowledge calls for further action-based learning and applied transdisciplinary research, which affects the distribution of research funds. In addition to the growing importance of the competency-based education (Barnet & Griffin, 1997) and specialized learning supported by the government, as they are considered key elements for competitiveness in a global economy.

Like Barnett, Stefan Collini—one of the trusted voices in the discourse on the purpose of the university, and who scrutinized Newman's idea of the university—raised a flag at the purpose of the university that might be derailed with the pressures of modern societies. He believes that higher education is a public good with "*an obligation to preserve and advance knowledge and to serve the intellectual needs of the nation*" (Collini, 2017, p.116) be it educational, scientific or cultural needs. Collini claimed that university's dependence on public and private funding resources is jeopardizing its freedom to fulfil its main mission of graduating well-rounded individuals with knowledge extending beyond specific job skills. He agrees with Barnett that universities are challenged by serving the agendas of policy-makers and businesses, which started defining the learning content to produce graduates with job market skills. A content that used to be designed by tenured and competent scholars aiming at providing a holistic education with long-term impact, rather than skills-specific education with short-term economic value. However, as the market needs

are changing constantly, the commercial businesses would benefit more from graduates with a wider scope of knowledge, which makes them more flexible and adaptable to change. Similarly, these agendas are shaping the research direction mostly defined by funding entities to serve their needs, which might not necessarily bring long-term value to society and the economy. Also, in accordance with Barnett, Collini considers that the rise of consumerism is shifting the power and authority toward students. The latter started being considered as 'customers' purchasing educational products, with a sense of entitlement and expectations that their degree ought to secure them highly paying jobs after graduation, in return for the tuition fees or the incurred debts (Collini, 2017). Satisfying those customers' needs is becoming a goal for universities, especially that they are requested more than ever to justify their need for additional funds, by proving their ability to generate more income (Collini, 2012).

As the knowledge offered by universities through teaching and research has been increasingly governed by public policies, businesses, and society to comply with their diversified needs, universities have lost a margin of their freedom to design and deliver a holistic learning experience. Collini (2012) declared that universities have much more than their economic value to offer, depending on the type of institutions and their unique role. He emphasized the importance of rethinking our perception and value for the university as "*long-term value of universities is becoming at stake*" (Collini, 2017, p.16).

In brief, higher education is undergoing a crisis with a growing debate over the purposes and knowledge provided by universities, the latter being requested to prove the relevance of their education, with a focus on skills development, functional learning, outcomes measurement, and performance assessment (Barnet & Griffin, 1997). They are increasingly questioned about the purpose and value of their education that would justify their expenditures and funding. As suggested by Barnett (1990) universities can counter these challenges by rethinking their role and repositioning themselves in a global world. Since they have become organizations with a mission statement, hierarchies, and bureaucratic models of authority, a democratic open dialogue within the university is essential. By recalling their legacy as a place for freedom/critical thinking, and an open forum for discussion, and by relying on academics who are 'practical epistemologists' with substantive knowledge and proven capacities, universities will be able to advance learning and to engage effectively with the global world (Barnett & Griffin, 1997). The deployment of valid and applicable knowledge appears crucial as universities become integrated into, not only the wider society, but also the government and its projects (Barnet & Griffin, 1997).

Despite universities' interconnectedness with their surroundings, which dates back to their founding to serve their communities, these institutions seem to have been long considered as serving two main purposes: teaching and research, with the latter seen as a key element in nurturing and advancing university teaching (Barnett, 1990). Although 'service' is known to be the 'third mission' of universities (Cummings, 1998), attending to the community's needs remained a neglected mission compared to the nexus teaching-research (Macfarlane & Barnett, 2005) that attracted the interest of scholars and policy makers of all times. Today, with the emerging socio-economic, political, and environmental challenges, universities' social engagement and service to the community are playing a vital complementary role to teaching and research. Service not only aligns with, but also fits within teaching and research as part of the academic staff roles and duties (Macfarlane & Barnett, 2005). Recent literature on higher education has been marked with a growing interest in social responsibility in universities (Mora et al., 2018), as this 'third mission' is proving to be paramount for the fulfilment of universities' purpose and missions to ensure sustainable human development.

3.2.3 The Roles of the University

The university was described by Manuel Castells (2001) as a major player in managing societal change and leading communities' advancement, traditionally by producing educated generations and recently by developing specialized highly skilled human capital; also, through research focused on meeting anticipated socio-economic needs. In addition to the university role in building civilized societies by instilling ethics and cultural values in future generations, and by providing a secure place for intellectual freedom, which allows individuals and groups to reflect beyond the limits of the 'possible, thinkable, and compliant'. Similarly, the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (TFHES, 2000) considers universities as a major contributor to identifying and developing a substantial pool of skilled talents, providing a space that ensures free discussions, and addressing issues of vital relevance to society.

These functions are closely tied to the university's main missions of providing relevant knowledge and advancing society through teaching and research, as well as contributing to sustainable human development through social engagement. As universities play diversified roles leading to social, economic, political, and cultural transformation with varying effects, this justifies the advancement of some countries more than others (Goransson & Brundenius, 2011).

3.2.3.1 Economic Role

Literature on higher education discussed universities' contributions to the advancement of local communities (Brennan et al., 2004) and the creation of sustainable solutions for societal and economic issues through teaching, research, scientific-technological development enabled by university-industry collaborations (Karatzoglou, 2013), and innovation transfer by providing professional workforce and fostering entrepreneurship (Goransson & Brundenius, 2011). Universities not only lead economic transformation by addressing the job market needs and enhancing students' employability through redesigned curriculum and specialized training of graduates; they also support the national economic development in different ways just like any business being income generators, key employers, consumers of goods and services, and market feeders of educated highly skilled human capital (Sen, 2011). Their major economic force stems from their direct expenditures on payroll, supplies, and operations, as well as the spending of enrolled international students. This is also coupled with universities' indirect influence on suppliers or recipient businesses, and their induced effect resulting from employees' household expenditures, which boost the socio-economic vitality (Sen, 2011). Surprisingly, a research project by Brennan et al. (2004, p.55) showed "*little or no evidence that the higher education sector was a major force in initiating or driving transformation*". Their study showed a "*relatively weak role of universities in stimulating economic change especially in Central and Eastern Europe*" on the short term (Brennan et al., 2004, p.55). However, they asserted that university reforms induced by economic goals might be essential for long-term socio-economic transformation. In addition to the existence of some university activities that have instant economic significance in most of the studied countries. Brennan et al.'s research (2004) restricted universities' economic role to responding to external governmental or job market pressures rather than inducing or leading the economic transformation. While a World Bank report (2002) linked knowledge-based economic growth to HEI's roles of training professional and specialized workforce, producing new knowledge, adapting universal knowledge to local needs, and diffusing ethics and values that are essential to building civilized societies. Moreover, universities' role extends beyond local borders, as extensive literature affirmed their contribution to regional economic development (Brekke, 2020; Uyarra, 2010) through local and international university-industry collaborations in research, teaching, and civic engagement (Gunasekara, 2006).

3.2.3.2 Political Role

Universities play a complex and contradictory role in political transformation, as they can be "*important supporters of old regimes as well as providers of 'protected space' in which critique*

and opposition could ferment" (Brennan et al., 2004, p.8), especially when HEIs are partially/fully funded by governments. In many instances, universities' political impact occurs naturally as part of the students' academic journey through teaching and the campus life experience. By securing a space for open political discussions and freedom of speech, they set the foundation for democratization and they contribute to reinforcing the civil society. They can also be a key player in governmental change through some of their members engaged in the political life, and through the qualified people they educate to lead civilized nations. Having graduates occupy political or governmental positions would affect the future of the country through their qualifications, values, and attitude toward the societal context. Accordingly, they would show either support or opposition to the social transformation process (Brennan et al., 2004). Due to the crucial political influence of universities, many developing countries design national policies that regulate not only the educational system, the fees, and the quality of education, but also the research direction for the advantage of the nation-building process (Brennan et al., 2004).

3.2.3.3 Social Role

Universities have long been considered as catalysts for social transformation mainly through generating specialized human capital and research congruent with identified economic needs, regardless of the ruling system be it democratic or authoritarian, and the university role be it autonomous or defined by strict governing policies. Moreover, at times of radical economic transformation, this role appears far-reaching as universities contribute to building new organizations of civil society, promoting novel cultural standards, and preparing new social leaders (Brennan et al., 2004). Thus, universities' role varies between igniting, spurring, or hindering social reform. Literature on the role of universities also highlighted a rather conservative function concerned with reproducing traditional standards and regulating the prevailing societal fabric (Bourdieu 1988; 1996 as cited by Brennan et al., 2004, p.17). As universities play multifaceted contradictory roles affecting social transformation, it is important to differentiate the types of universities (private, public, elite, mass education, etc.), and the different roles played by each institution or even each department within it, in order to identify the distinct role of university. Apart from that, research on universities' roles focused much on the effect of social change on HEIs imposing internal reforms due to external strains such as commercialization, marketization, rising competition and accountability, among others (Brennan et al., 2004).

3.2.3.4 Cultural Role

In addition to their key role in building the nation, universities are vital to transmitting cultural values (Brennan et al., 2004) through what they teach and practice. Their curriculum and arts related courses, as well as theaters, concert halls, and other campus facilities that host cultural performances (Chatterton, 2000) add to that effect. Students, by majoring in Fine Arts, Drama, Music, Media, and similar fields, grasp the cultural content taught at university and transfer it back to society through their personal interactions outside the classroom. This leads to enriching the arts community, generating relevant job opportunities, and developing various cultural industries by creating demand for cultural products and services (Chatterton, 2000), resulting in a cultural transformation of society. Universities' role in cultural change seems complex and controversial with tension arising between preserving national cultural values and transmitting international cultures through international students, creating mixed identities within universities and society (Brennan et al., 2004).

3.2.3.5 Environmental Role

Recently, universities have been regarded as paramount actors in the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (McCowan, 2016), including those related to the environment. The International Association of Universities (IAU, 2019) pinpointed the promotion of sustainability and the protection of the environment as a main focus in universities' third mission. In its report titled '*Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals: From Awareness to Action*' published in 2019, IAU guides universities on how to implement the SDGs into their operations and curricula. Additionally, the UNESCO (1998) has highlighted the vital role of universities in achieving the SDGs and has encouraged the collaboration among universities and various stakeholders to advance sustainable development. Recent studies explored universities' role in promoting environmental sustainability, as well as research on the incorporation of sustainability into curricula, the implementation and the engagement of students and staff in sustainability practices (Barnett et al., 2018; Leal Filho et al., 2019b; Soini et al., 2021). These studies affirm universities' role toward the achievement of the SDGs, and the importance of embedding sustainability in their core mission and practices.

In fact, a study on higher education and sustainable development conducted by the IAU in 2017, revealed that more than 75% of the surveyed universities are familiar with the SDGs, while most of the respondents believe that sustainable development is greatly linked to environmental issues (IAU, 2017). However, less than half of them planned an actual strategic implementation of

sustainable development in their institutions. Nevertheless, many universities engage in activities towards the implementation of the 13th SDG - Climate Action, of which the University of Gothenburg by establishing a climate fund to help support projects dedicated to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases from its events and operations. Another example is the research and teaching for climate action by the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, which provides relevant predictions and advice to various sectors and stakeholders including government. El-Jardali et al. (2018) noted a growing partnership on that aspect between universities and governments. Alongside the mentioned examples remain many more such as the implementation of the Center for Climate Change Research and Innovations at Makerere University in Uganda, designing a photovoltaic charging station for solar powered electric vehicles by Dublin Institute of Technology, and UNICA's student initiatives towards achieving valuable energy savings (HESD, International Association of Universities, 2019) among others.

To conclude, universities play multifaceted roles with transformational effect on society at the economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental levels. These increasingly complex roles seem intertwined and interrelated. Yet, this influence on society is far from being unilateral as universities cannot escape the effects of the constant change, the evolving needs and expectations of society, the rising challenges (Goddard et al., 1994), the growing globalization and market forces, which add complexity to their roles and their expected contributions.

3.3 The Challenges of Universities

Early in the 21st century, universities have experienced drastic changes, which deeply affected the higher education landscape. This transformation started toward the mid-1990s with the shift from an elite private education to a public mass education (Castells, 2001), and the emergence of new groups of adult students in need for continuous education. Furthermore, globalization and the fast-paced technologic advancement, which marked the first part of the 21st century (Forest & Altbach, 2007), have had a major influence on universities. In addition to the growing market forces and the shrinking governmental support, which have spurred different trends denoting the commodification of higher education, such as the internationalization, marketization, and privatization of higher education. Moreover, the exponential growth in the number of universities, the emergence of the 'Enterprise University', and the adoption of 'business-like' practices intensified the competition in the higher education market. Universities were forced into a race of rankings and accreditations with a crucial need to enhance their image and reputation in order to boost their enrolment yields and funds attraction.

These trends and challenges have threatened traditional universities' purposes, disrupted the learning and teaching processes, and implied a reform of universities' policies and practices.

3.3.1 Massification of Higher Education

Higher education that was long restricted to the governing elite has gradually become more accessible to lower social levels as of the mid-twentieth century (Collini, 2012; Rothblatt, 2012). According to Martin Trow who conceptualized the evolution of the HE system into elite, mass, and universal systems, this expansion was driven by 'external forces' (Trow, 2000). It was partially due to the growth of elite universities, the increase of jobs requiring a university degree, and the growing number of adult students seeking life-long learning. This evolution has been translated through a growing number of universities from 3,599 in 1990-91 to 4,583 institutions in 2015-16, coupled with a remarkable increase in the number of students from 32.6M in 1970 to 250.8M in 2020 (249.8% increase) (NCES, 2018), estimated to reach 594.1M students in 2040 (Calderon, 2018).

Trow (2000) noted the escalating challenges imposed by the massification, due to the fast change in numbers, rise in costs, public austerity and underfunding, which imply educating more students with less resources, putting at risk the quality of teaching and research. While some universities are still adjusting to the massification and its impact on funding, governance, and quality of education among others, they suddenly found themselves pressured to ride the wave of universal access driven by the speedy information technology development.

With the massification that started in the United States and was later outgrown by China, turning into a reality across the globe (Forest & Altbach, 2007), it became crucial to understand the trends in the geopolitical shifts, the constant urbanization, and the accelerated technological advancement because of their impact on the planning, performance, funding and evaluation of higher education. This increase in demand for higher education, especially in a 'universal' system, with the substantial drop in public support in many countries, is challenging universities to secure sufficient funds to make quality education equally affordable to all deserving students, and to cover their growing expenditures. Private universities in specific seem more affected as they rely mainly on student fees, grants, and donations with the constrained public funding, which is encouraging "*the commercialization of research and teaching, and the movement of both increasingly outside the institutions of higher education"* (Trow, 2000, p.2). 'Turning knowledge into money' is becoming the new culture (Nixon, 2012, p.143). This expansion is also nurturing stratification, with a growing

importance accorded to university rankings amid the fierce competition for students and funds (Nixon, 2012).

Although the massification of higher education presumably brings benefits to the country as a larger population becomes enrolled in non-elite institutions, which represents a clear expression against social and economic injustice, it is believed that this trend will effect a deep transformation of the higher education system and the country as a whole (Gibbons, 1998), with a varying impact across different social, cultural, and political contexts (Hornsby & Osman, 2014).

3.3.2 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The past few decades witnessed the implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) in various industries such as engineering, medicine, tourism, and banking, among others. This digital revolution and speedy technological advancement deeply affected various aspects of people's lives and changed the way businesses and operations are managed, as it resulted in generating large amounts of information, which can be very beneficial if organized, examined, and interpreted properly (Martins et al., 2019).

Similarly, technology implementation has had a significant impact on the landscape and management of higher education. On one hand, it has facilitated effective resources' management with the increased data and complexity in the education management processes, therefore setting off the performance and progress of involved parties (Vicent et al., 2015). Through learning analytics which is based on collecting and analyzing data on students' activities in the provided online space, universities can identify and implement timely enhancements (Flavin, 2017). Additionally, this information can be useful to design targeted marketing campaigns (Burd et al., 2015). Although this process supports students' learning and helps in providing a more personalized learning experience, however, it raises ethical concerns (Sharples et al., 2015) and issues related to the privacy of student data (Johnson et al., 2016) stemming from tracking students' online activities and sharing this information among various parties. Moreover, a study by Michael Flavin (2012) revealed that students tend to rely more on outside resources, which are often free, unsophisticated, and suitable, rather than the technologies provided by their universities in support of teaching and learning. This affects universities' role as a 'gatekeeper to knowledge' and reduces their ability to monitor and control the learning process (Flavin, 2012).

On the other hand, ICT incorporation has clearly advanced higher education, as universities have been using technologies as simple as emails and text messages to communicate with students, or more complex ones such as university library databases, online submission tools, plagiarism detection software, and virtual learning environments, among others (Flavin, 2017). Technology has also advanced teaching processes and research by providing wider access and interconnectivity among academics and institutions across the globe.

Moreover, it has boosted distance learning with its social and economic returns at the country level. The Massive Open Online Classes (MOOCs) initiated in 2008 represent an example of technology-supported learning, which was induced by globalization and limited budgets. Such forms of free/affordable online learning, which is characterized by open access and scalability of the courses, appeared in response to the growing need for various modes of education to serve a diverse population of learners including professionals seeking continuous education and people with less financial resources and access to universities. These online learning platforms offer investors—be it universities or businesses—access to new differentiated educational markets, a source of income generation, and a marketing/branding opportunity for elite and prestigious universities, as they design courses with contemporary content for philanthropy purposes, which address "*demographic, economic, and geographic constraints*" (Yuan & Powell, 2013, p.6). Yet, these online platforms remain questionable in terms of their quality of education, users' privacy which is sometimes at stake, since their information might be sold to recruiters or promoters (Yuan & Powell, 2013), as well as their inclusiveness as users require access to technological equipment (laptop, phone, etc.), stable internet connection, and some digital knowledge to engage efficiently.

Another form of disruptive innovation —defined by Christensen (2003) as the combination of pioneering technologies and business models with high potential for speedy growth at a low cost, creating new markets with a different customer base— are the micro-credentials. These are "*industry-aligned short units of learning that are certified or credentialed, and they can (mostly) 'stack' or count towards a higher education qualification"* (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021, p.212), or as defined by Oliver (2019, p.i) *"a certification of assessed learning that is additional, alternate, complementary to or a formal component of a formal qualification"*. The rise of micro-credentials associated with the 21st century skills and employability, has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which increased unemployment and negatively impacted the enrolment of international students, leading universities to seek new markets (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021). The hype around micro-credentials and the competition among giant technological companies like

Google and Apple, which are making arms dedicated to education, are expected to transform the higher education landscape, as 'unbundling' becomes more evident (Yuan & Powell, 2013).

'Unbundling' has been defined as "*the differentiation of tasks and services that were once offered by a single provider or individual (i.e. bundled) and the subsequent distribution of these tasks and services among different providers and individuals*" (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015, p.96). This trend is gaining a growing acceptance fed by the funding constraints facing the exponential growth of the higher education system, the changing needs of the modern society, and the expansion of the private sector (Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016a, 2016b). It entails disaggregating the university functions and activities into separate constituents, which will be sold to 'customers' according to their needs (McCowan, 2017).

The global Covid-19 pandemic reinforced unbundling by making internet-based learning a main tool for teaching. Although the face-to-face learning experience and on-campus life are invaluable for students, the extending period of online learning due to the pandemic has tamed both students and teachers to accept and adjust to the new dominant mode of teaching, which has become common globally. This has set the stage and granted more acceptance for micro-credentials and online professional certification programs such as the Google Career Certificates, for example. These have been advertised with a promise of professional training, which ensures in-demand skills, secures high-paying jobs, and grants access to potential employers, all of it achievable within few months and made available with financial support (grants and scholarships). This represents a 'dream coming true' for a majority of university students who spend years and burdening budgets on degrees which, in many cases, do not ensure a satisfactory return on their investment.

Moreover, this pandemic that disrupted life worldwide and imposed long periods of lockdown in many countries, accentuated ICT's pivotal role for people and organizations globally. In higher education, institutions equipped with advanced technology and the appropriate infrastructure have shown a faster response and adaptability in shifting to the virtual mode of teaching. This system has granted students an interactive access to their course material, instructors, classmates, etc., while others have suffered the interruption of their services, which threatened their viability and progress. In such times of crisis, ICT constituted a competitive edge for universities that were able to transition instantly from the face-to-face classroom and physical presence on campus, to the online teaching and delivery of their supporting services. The pandemic asserted the value of keeping up with the fast-paced technological revolution for universities, through investing not only

in acquiring new technologies, but also in advancing the knowledge and skills of staff, faculty, and students to remain on top of the game. However, this added to the universities' challenges especially in rural areas that suffer from the lack of infrastructure (internet, phone service, electricity, etc.), financial resources, and qualified human capital (Forest & Altbach, 2007). ICT implementation costs are high and possibly unaffordable to many HEIs, despite becoming vital for universities in the 21st century (Oliver, 2002).

With ICT appearing as a necessity during the isolation and social distancing periods imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the issue of digital inclusion has gained a greater importance. Digital inclusion does not only depend on the availability/affordability/access to devices and internet connection, but also on having the skills and knowledge to use technology to improve the quality of life in all aspects and for everyone. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index defines the digital inclusion threshold as "*the point above which a person's level of access, ability, and capacity to pay for digital technologies enables them to use digital services and participate in contemporary digital economic, civic and social life"* (ADII, 2019). Accordingly, the ADII identifies four groups based on the resources available to them, ranging from highly excluded (low overall score) to highly included (very high score). Digital inclusion issues are beyond the possible interventions of universities, and require governmental policies and national strategies to ensure low- and middle-class inclusion and to achieve sustainable solutions.

As universities rethink their ICT use and implementation especially after the global pandemic, which disrupted their operations, and will definitely influence the way that future higher education is planned and delivered, they need to be mindful about digital inclusion among their community. They also have to account for the growing threat of disruptive innovations and unbundling represented by online learning platforms and micro-credentials, as they are gaining more acceptance worldwide. Although these seem to secure university's cost-efficiency and students' increased employability through in-demand skills development, they jeopardize the synergy among teaching, research, and social engagement, as well as the multidisciplinarity, which is vital to solving global challenges (McCowan, 2017). Breaking down the university functions into separate constituents offered to customers according to their needs, risks dissolving the third mission of universities, which according to Macfarlane and Barnett (2005), complements and fits naturally within the nexus teaching-research as part of the academic staff roles and duties. With unbundling effecting a disconnect among the university missions, the purpose of the traditional university, which is providing a whole education toward sustainable human development, would be at stake.

3.3.3 Globalization

For decades, globalization has been a major force affecting higher education similarly to any industry worldwide. The impact of the global systems, which is infiltrating into people's daily lives in every nation, enabled an intensive communication between people beyond space and time borders, facilitated by cheaper and faster technological advancement (Marginson, 2000). Universities tied to their local communities and bound by their traditions, are now operating in a larger regional and global ecosystem with varying needs. Globalization, this complex phenomenon expressed as "*the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness*" (OECD, 2008, p.53), led to a closer connection among universities, accelerated by the information and communication technology development.

As universities have been operating simultaneously in different, yet interrelated and symbiotic terrains, Marginson and Rhoades (2002) suggested a new framework for analytical research in higher education, the Glonacal Agency Heuristic, where 'Glonacal' encompasses the three domains: *Glo*bal, *na*tional, and lo*cal*. This framework permits to consider the role of the three factors defined by Clark (1983)—the states, markets, professionals—and their impact on higher education in the global, national, and local spheres. This allows a more effective assessment of the role and influence of international markets on HEIs, which are regulated by national policies and local economies (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002).

Many researchers agree that globalization brings new opportunities to universities in teaching and research (Marginson, 2000; Morey, 2004). According to Morey (2004), globalization fuels the emergence of entrepreneurial for-profit institutions which appear more cost-effective and customer-centric, compared to other universities. Furthermore, it bolsters the internationalization of higher education and helps universities expand into new markets beyond their local borders, as it entails the establishment of partnerships with universities overseas, franchising, and building campuses in other countries (Marginson, 2000; Morey, 2004). Globalization also enables social mobility of academic staff, students, and researchers, whereby openness and cultural diversity facilitate effective research collaborations and innovation sharing (Marginson, 2008; OECD, 2008). All of which enhance universities' international exposure, reputation, and ranking.

Simultaneously, globalization heightens the daily challenges of universities. According to Marginson (2000), it pressures universities, particularly those that show resistance or avoidance to change due to limited capabilities, unwillingness, or inability to keep up with the standards of

international education. In addition to the difficulty in finding a balance between the university's academic goals and its corporate objectives implied by the internationalization and the commodification of higher education (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Globalization is also believed to create an institutional crisis of values and identity, which become shattered between the local culture and the global diversity. This requires innovative and thoughtful strategies to sustain and enhance the university's national identity. In this regard, Marginson (2000, p.28) emphasizes the role of nation building by investing more funds in the national higher education system: "*to be an effective global player, a nation must be strongly grounded in local/national identity and a local network of relationships. For this national/local identity is what it takes into the global environment*".

These changes resulted in the emergence of a corporate-like version of university—the 'Enterprise University', with a tendency to deconstruct the academic profession (Marginson, 2000). Its academic environment has been marked with a shift in the governance power from collegial to administrative managers, along with an increased reliance on part-time faculty, which threatens the security and stability of the academic profession. In addition to a management-driven spirit ruling programs development, and a materialistic valuation of research, closely tied to its income generation ability rather than to its quality. Moreover, the claimed student-centeredness appears more of a marketing cliché rather than a candid will to account for students' needs, as they became— like consumers—concerned about the 'value for money' (Marginson, 2000).

Since globalization entails looking at the world as a whole, it requires universities to practice their role as social agents within a global society rather than a local community (Breton & Lambert, 2004). Despite the pressing corporate goals justified by an intensifying competition among institutions in the global market and constrained funds, universities should not be distracted from their main missions of teaching, research, and social engagement, as these constitute the core value of the university and the reason for its existence.

3.3.4 Funding Resources

The shift to mass higher education increased the costs for universities, which initiated a growing interest in university funding, especially with the decrease or lack of public funds in many countries. As governments are opting for reduced or restricted performance-based investments in higher education, universities in general, and private universities in specific, have been challenged to identify alternative resources to cover their costs and ensure their viability.

Between 1960 and 1970, education witnessed an unprecedented expansion and was considered as agent of economic development and generation of skilled human capital. This growing importance translated into an increased share of the governmental budget, which grew from 11.7% in 1960 to 16.1% in 1984 (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985). Shortly after, with the rise of unemployment and brain drain in developing countries, some voices questioned the economic role of education and warned of a projected crisis in public funding, which started a decade later (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985). Consequently, some developing countries reintroduced student fees, which were surprisingly found to contribute to 'efficiency and equity' according to research studies by Birdsall (1982) and Thobani's (1983), although it is believed that charging tuition fees favours elitism and unequal access to education (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985, p.148-149).

Today, despite the value accorded to higher education as public good with a major role in advancing the country's cultural identity, human capital, and innovations, universities are most importantly seen as engines of economic development. Yet, governments are faced with difficulties in sustaining the traditional substantial public funding of higher education, even in the most advanced nations (Brennan et al., 2004). This has left HEIs worldwide with funding constraints affecting the execution of broad-based agendas to contribute to the local and regional development. However, the implementation of new strategies for resources allocation has been witnessed in many areas of the world, of which "formula funding" or the allocation of resources based on performance, notably in developed countries in Europe (Liefner 2003; Zhang et al., 2016) and Nordic countries (Schmidt, 2012). As such, UK public policies granted a greater value to research that contributes to innovation and economic growth. It implemented policies to assess the quality of research like the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and linked it to the distribution of research funding.

Similarly, in the US, HE public funding suffered from a substantial decrease in the states' financing that used to cover the lion's share, and the federal funds that became less accessible after it used to support tuition fees (as financial aid) and research (Kellogg Commission, 2000). HEIs there can receive from the Community Outreach Partnerships Centers Program (COPC) working under the patronage the Department of Housing and Urban Development, grants geared for initiatives targeting urban communities in need for support, and these grants require equal amounts from other public or private sponsors (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.).

Other areas of the world may have found different ways to compensate for the lack of funding from governments. For example, in Thailand, a funding reform has been implemented that cuts public

spending and encourages the cooperation between universities and various industries as a new means of income generation (Schiller & Liefner, 2007). While in Sub-Saharan Africa, where HEIs are the most financially challenged in the world (Teferra, 2005), countries are still struggling to face the regression of public funding (Teferra, 2013).

Alongside these sources of funding, universities have been increasingly relying on donations (from individuals and organizations), as well as on a diversified portfolio of services not limited to language teaching, continuing education, and paid consultancy, yet these sources are believed to have a questionable durability (Weiler, 2000).

Moreover, the emergence of a new player with perceived impact on funding —the market— encouraged the deregulation and increased the autonomy of universities (Schmidt, 2012; Weiler, 2000). Competition among universities augmented the need for funding resources, since any efforts to enhance their image and reputation such as hiring qualified professors, offering scholarships, providing quality services and facilities, etc., all of this necessitates finances (Bok, 2009). As a result, universities were directed toward new profit-generating alternatives identified by focusing on public needs. They invested efforts in serving the private industry through research and innovation, providing continuing education for professionals seeking further advancement (Bok, 2009), and satisfying consumerized students (Collini, 2017), among other activities. Universities' creativity in generating revenue became a mark of success versus competitors, while knowledge conversion into revenue became a mark of its value (Bok, 2009). Moreover, the concept of higher education as a private good became increasingly accepted worldwide, and expressed through a change of funding patterns, where direct beneficiaries are expected to sponsor higher education (Forest & Altbach, 2007).

While funding is crucial for universities' social engagement, which enriches their "*traditional academic agendas, and not inferior to laboratory-based research and classroom-based teaching*" (Schuetze, 2012, p.74), the decreased governmental funding pushed universities further toward the commodification of higher education, affecting the equity and quality of teaching and research (Naidoo, 2005). With tuition fees becoming a substantial source of funding, universities are facing increased financial risks related to the fluctuation in student enrolment (Universities UK, 2016). Hence the importance of developing a competitive advantage to boost university's attractiveness and recruitment efforts.

3.3.5 Market Forces

The transition from elite to mass higher education, along with the technological advancement and the decline in governmental funding for teaching and research, increased universities' competition and compelled them to identify new opportunities to generate income in order to cover their rising expenditures and ensure their progress. With the limited or lacking state support, tuition fees became a main source of funding for universities, which pressured them to polish their image and reputation in order to enhance their enrolment yields. Universities adopted business-like strategies, implemented marketing principles, and consumerized students, signaling the emergence of new concepts, such as commercialization and marketization, which are often used interchangeably by many researchers (Marginson, 2016; McClure et al., 2020) to express the shift of higher education from a public good to a commodity in the educational market.

According to Marginson and Considine (2000), the external constraints shifted the university's main role from building good citizens to fulfilling business agendas and generating income. It also affected universities' internal structures and implied a transition from policy to governance, which ensures a balanced coexistence of conflicting interests.

3.3.5.1 Commercialization

The term commercialization is used to describe universities' growing dependence on market-oriented strategies to generate income and support their operations. Commercial practices such as industry-sponsored research, selling patents to companies, licensing agreements, and sponsorship for courses or athletic teams, are not new to universities. Since the early twentieth century, American universities such as the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania have used advertising and publicity to attract students and enhance their visibility. The University of Illinois' President Andrew Draper stated that the university "*is a business concern as well as a moral and intellectual instrumentality, and if business methods are not applied to its management, it will break down*" (Draper, 1906, p.36). In the late 1990s, American universities appeared as the country's main provider of key elements for development and success including skilled experts, specialized knowledge, and scientific/technical inventions that can serve for curing people or enhancing their quality of life. This significant role increased funding and money-generating opportunities for universities, expanding the size and scope of their commercial practices.

The rise of commercialization was linked to the administrators' efforts to expand the size and reputation of the university (Veblen, 1954). It was also related to the university's loss of purpose,

where blurred or vague institutional values such as 'commitment to excellence' encourage the pursuit of materialistic gains (Bloom, 1987; Readings, 1996). Arguably, faculties such as the Business and Sciences that usually have clear purposes, practice the most entrepreneurial activities (Bok, 2009). Other views associated the increase of commercial activities to the impact of the private economy, the attempts of powerful wealthy donors and some business-oriented trustees' members to control the institution and commodify its teaching and research (Bok, 2009). While university professors explained the expansion of entrepreneurial activities on campus as a reaction toward reduced governmental funding as of the 1970s (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). These cuts caused universities to explore new income-generating opportunities to afford essential competition elements, such as recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty and researchers, deploying advertising campaigns to attract tuition-paying students, and providing faculty and students with advanced technologies and sophisticated equipment.

3.3.5.2 Marketization, Internationalization, and Privatization

The concept of marketization describes the commodification of higher education —treating students as consumers and pursuing profit as primary objective for universities (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Since the early 1980s, the 'market' paradigm in higher education has gained a growing attention (Neave, 1997). The exponential growth in the number of HEIs and the decrease in public funds intensified the competition among universities and nurtured commodification. As service providers, universities have been acting like business entities promoting educational services to students-customers (Pabian, 2019) by applying market-oriented and customer-centered strategies. With the marketization of higher education, universities started adopting the free-market practices, minimizing their production costs and promoting only highly demanded 'products' to increase their sales and profits (Kwong, 2000).

The internationalization is one example of the commodification of higher education, whereby universities implement features with global dimensions such as exchange programs, international curriculum, and franchise among others, to attract international students and increase their revenues (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Despite the fact that this internationalization has expanded the educational market beyond local and regional borders in terms of international students and research collaborations, yet, it increased competition making it global (Zomer & Benneworth, 2011).

Privatization is another illustration of this commodification. The inability of public universities to meet the growing demand for higher education coupled with the need for a distinguished high-quality education led to the development of private universities (James, 1987) that rely substantially on tuition fees, and made them outgrow the public sector in many countries like Brazil and Colombia (Forest & Altbach, 2007). The privatization altered these institutions' priorities and drifted their attention from their role as social actors, to focus mainly on achieving revenues that ensure their sustainability. Interestingly, the transition to privatisation did not undermine the social contribution of Chilean universities, for example, which is inconsistent with the claimed effect of privatisation, as a negative connotation and a decline of universities' social engagement are often associated with the privatisation of higher education (Bernasconi, 2005).

The marketization of higher education seems justifiable with the threatening competition among universities, heightened by rankings and accreditations, and by students' open access to a wealth of information about HEIs that would define their choice of university. Today, students or 'educational services' consumers' in the marketization context, have access more than ever to information about universities. They make their choices according to their needs in terms of programmes of study, quality of education, accessibility of location, affordability, reputation and ranking, graduates' employability, and other factors (Brown, 2015).

With the growing number of universities and the diversity of services that are provided, each university seeks a competitive advantage, which will push its ranking higher and thereby make it more appealing to potential students. Some universities might opt for decreasing their costs and increasing financial aid and scholarships to entice favoured students (Natale & Doran, 2012). Other universities work to reduce their costs and enhance the quality of their services (Brown, 2015), by revisiting their curricula, developing modern content that meets the needs of the market, recruiting qualified instructors, implementing innovative teaching tools, or providing a rich campus experience.

Universities can also focus on strengthening their relationship with their surroundings. Usually, the local community is the primary feeder of universities' admissions within the geographical area. Accounting for the local community's needs will make a university a 'preferred' institution. It will attract more students and possibly generate greater local political support, resulting in easier access to national funds (Benneworth et al., 2010). By incorporating some of these approaches in their practices, universities can achieve a competitive edge. The strategies adopted by universities have

a crucial and determining impact on student satisfaction and loyalty. In turn, this influences recruitment and retention, which themselves represent major challenges for universities (Sánchez-Hernández & Mainardes, 2016), as they affect their revenues and funds, hence their viability and progress. Finding a balance between the university's attempts to secure its survival and to achieve its social engagement mission augmented universities' challenges and dilemmas.

It is worth noting that the transition toward commercialization and marketization in a market-driven HE industry where institutions compete for funds and students, and prioritize marketing/branding over educational objectives (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004), this trend raises some concerns and threatens the academic values for profit seeking. By acting like "*knowledge factories*" (Bok, 2009, p.16), teaching and research risk being assessed according to their selling value and conversion into cash, which jeopardizes their intellectual quality and values. In addition, compromising the university's academic standards and integrity harms the public trust, which becomes irreversible.

Currently, universities are operating in a complex global world subjugated by diverse trends and circumstances. From massification, to globalization, speedy technologic advancement, local and global market forces, and decreased public funds, universities are facing massive challenges with significant impact on their practices and management. Besides, universities operate in local communities with various needs and expectations, which they cannot overlook as these institutions emerged and flourished within their communities. The strains emanating from the combination of local and global factors, topped with the increase in higher education cost, are heightening the tension in the relation between universities and society. This requires universities to implement regional and global dimensions to ease the devastating impact of the emerging challenges. It also compels them to reconsider their roles, programs, and strategies to adapt to the shifting needs of the community (Goransson & Brundenius, 2011), and to implement differentiated, student-centered approaches to succeed in attracting and retaining students, hence surviving the competition (Ogunmokun et al., 2020).

3.4 Universities and Social Engagement

Universities constitute an essential element of society, and their interconnectedness has become vital to the sustainability and growth of both of them. Universities rely much on local communities at least in recruiting students, faculty, and staff, purchasing their supplies, and getting some funds. Simultaneously, the host communities burdened by complex technological, economic and geo-political forces in a globally changing world, have been exhibiting growing expectations and

reliance on universities to contribute to their welfare and economic development. Universities, conventionally considered as knowledge creators and disseminators, are being held accountable to provide a wider access to quality teaching and research that is relevant to society's needs in its content and practices. They are expected to play an essential role in affording equally accessible, high quality, advanced education (Kellogg Commission, 2000) to build a new generation of talents able to address their communities' pressing challenges. Charles (2007, p.18) expressed the much-needed proximity between universities and their communities as follows:

> *"As universities become a more central part of people's lives with a higher proportion attending university and benefiting from the direct consequences of their education and research then it is not possible for universities to maintain an aloof position from society, nor is it desirable for the good of the universities and the pursuit of knowledge".*

It is worth noting that the contract between universities and society had been 'formalized' around 160 years ago, with the Morrill Act and the establishment of land-grant universities in the United States in 1862, which clearly emphasized the role of universities in driving economic development. The growing importance of the territory was denoted through changes in higher education policy in many countries, and through funding streams tied to universities' regional engagement, such as the Higher Education Regional Development (HERD) fund and the premium of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which is linked to the recruitment of underprivileged students (Chatterton, 2000). This prompted universities to renew their social contract with local communities. From the 1990s onward, this relationship took different aspects with the rise of various concepts revolving around the 'third mission' of university and its role in driving economic development and innovation. These concepts encompassed the 'civic university' (Goddard, 2009), the 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer, 1990), the 'regional innovation systems' (Cooke, 2004), the 'Triple Helix and Quadruple Helix' (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1998; Carayannis and Campbell (2009), the 'new knowledge production Mode 2' (Gibbons et al., 1994), the 'entrepreneurial university' (Etzkowitz, 1983; Clark, 1998), the 'anchor institutions' (Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001), the 'stewardship of place' (AASCU, 2002), , and 'university social responsibility' (Vallaeys, 2007). Most of these concepts originated in the US, UK, Chile and Latin America. These notions appear to be connected or overlapping in some areas, yet their main commonality resides in their focus on universities' social engagement and contribution to the socio-economic development of local, regional, and global communities.

3.4.1 Land-Grant University

The interrelationship between universities and their surrounding is as old as the historic Morrill Act and the foundation of land-grant universities signed during the American Civil War in 1862 (Kellogg Commission, 1999). According to this act, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln and Justin Smith Morrill supported the establishment of American public colleges and universities through federal funds. These state colleges aimed at addressing the learning and research needs of local communities by providing quality education and knowledge to underprivileged and workers' dependents, and conducting research focused on current issues in agriculture, mining, and military science. Land-grant universities had a mandate to offer agricultural extension services and programs that promote agriculture, support farmers, and improve the quality of life for people in rural areas (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2022). These programs had a significant role in developing agricultural practices and enhancing people's wellbeing in rural areas.

Another Morrill act issued in 1890, offered cash rather than federal lands for the states to establish colleges provided they ensure equal admission conditions without racial discrimination. Through the Morrill acts that appeared in response to the First Industrial Revolution and the socio-economic changes (Pinheiro et al., 2015), Morrill and Lincoln's aspirations to disseminate knowledge and to establish 'the public's universities' contributed significantly to the fast economic growth of the United States, through the land-grant universities and the applied knowledge they provided. Most of these were classified as research institutions toward the end of the 1990s. However, with their excessive focus on research and graduate studies, their primary role of expanding people's access to higher education ceased, and their social contract weakened (McDowell, 2001).

In 1996, the Kellogg Commission —a group of 25 university presidents and chancellors— held its first meeting on *'the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities*'. This commission launched yearly reports, which highlighted pressing issues facing public HEIs and provided recommendations for change. Each of the six reports addressed specific challenges and proposed action plans for public universities, which altogether constituted a holistic vision of the public higher education in the 21st century. Consecutively, these reports advocated for student-centeredness, increasing enrolment through wider inclusion and diversity, engagement with local communities, lifelong learning, and consistent campus culture (Sherlin, 2001). In its sixth and final report '*Renewing the Covenant*' (2000), the Kellogg Commission emphasized the importance of renewing historical ties between American HEIs and the public to ensure the continuous success of the nation. A call for the land-grant universities to go back to their roots, as being the 'people's

universities' is what gave them an edge over other institutions (McDowell, 2001). This relationship with the public was burdened by the increasing pressures to invest in education, the growing financial inequalities and uneven access to education, as well as a growing dependence on universities for knowledge advancement and the actualization of social and economic growth. The commission called upon the 'Friends of the American Public Higher Education' to provide a solid support for public universities, as it is getting harder for them to fulfil their commitments with the rising global challenges, the increasingly diverse student body (age, race, ethnicity, etc.), and the shrinking public funding. Additionally, the commission's final report in March 2000 highlighted the blurring effect of rapid technological changes on the spatial/geographic context of public universities, since institutions are expected to expand beyond their local and regional territories, and to adapt to the necessities of international education. It reiterated the role of public institutions in making high quality education and research equally accessible to all. It underlined the need for the privatization of public universities in response for the drastic change of public (state and federal) funds. It also underscored the expanding commodification of education (where students are regarded as customers), and the diminishing differentiation between public and private universities, as the latter are adopting the missions of public universities with a focus on the 'public good' by providing broader access to education, research, and social engagement.

In its final report, the Kellogg Commission revisited the primary mission of land-grant universities that is 'teaching, research, and service' to adapt it to the needs of the 21st century. It urged public universities to commit to the renewed contract of 'Learning, Discovery, and Engagement', by making quality education equally accessible and affordable to the whole population, and by directing research and social engagement to solving the pressing socio-economic challenges. A call for going back to their roots, as being the 'people's university' is what gave an edge to the land-grant universities (McDowell, 2001). While the state is expected to develop partnerships with public universities and to support academic governance ensuring wider accessibility and better service for the community facing the global challenges. The federal government is supposed to ensure the technological advancement of public institutions, the development of policies that entice university-industry partnerships in applied research, as well as advantageous tax legislations that protect educational savings and expenditures. Through this partnership, with a solid federal and state support, American HEIs ought to secure a leading position through developing and applying technological innovations in the transition toward a knowledge-based economy.

Ten years after the Kellogg Commission adjourned, Graham Spanier (2011)—Chair of the Commission and President of the Pennsylvania State University— affirmed in his speech at a national conference, that much has been achieved in regards to student-centeredness. However, more can and must be done to advance engagement. By focusing on institutional strengths, ensuring wider inclusion, maximizing the use of technology, fostering a scholarship of engagement, and capitalizing on mutually beneficial partnerships, universities can address societal challenges effectively and gain public trust. For Spanier (2011), engagement is a key mission for universities. It encompasses simultaneously a pressing need and a great opportunity for universities to make a difference in their two-way relationship with society.

Recently, in their book '*Land-grant universities for the future: Higher education for the public good'*, Stephen Gavazzi and Gordon Gee (2018) discussed the 'covenant' between land-grant universities and the public, and how these universities can benefit local communities while supporting themselves. Interestingly, they presented their vision of the role of land-grant universities, not only through their synthesis of 27 interviews conducted with land-grant universities' presidents and chancellors, but also through sharing personal experiences. Their captivating stories shed light on the importance of the campus-community relationship and the way it shapes students' lives. They also highlighted the tensions created by conflicting goals: aiming to advance in rankings reduces accessibility to university, while land-grant universities should secure a wider access of the community. Another example arises when setting faculty rewarding systems and tenure: should it be linked to research excellence which boosts ranking, or to engagement which aligns with the main mission of land-grant institutions? (Gallegos, 2019). Moreover, in their vision of the modern land-grant universities, Gavazzi and Gee (2018) emphasized the role of leadership in addressing the specific community's needs, countering the tendency toward homogeneity and the decreased value of the degree. However, their book lacks students' perceptions of land-grant universities, which would have helped in developing more student-centered strategies.

This overview about the land-grant universities shows that, despite their struggles to maintain their commitment to being the 'people's university', these institutions paved the way to a closer relationship between universities and their territory, a connection that evolved into different concepts and aspects of engagement.

3.4.2 Civic University

The civic university also known by the 'redbrick' university is among the oldest representations of university's relationship with local communities in the nineteenth century in the UK. William Whyte (2015) portrayed the history of these institutions' architectural and social development in a captivating way, presenting the university as a '*place'* (rather than *idea* as per Newman) with an identity, that promotes community life besides education, and that would shape the twentieth century universities in the UK.

Many civic universities established in the nineteenth century in response to the local industrial needs, showed both excellence and public service, and were supported through local funding (Goddard & Vallance, 2011). The rising demand on higher education worldwide coupled with a growing recognition for the role of university and its contribution to the social and economic development, enticed policy makers and governmental authorities to increase their support and public funding for education and research. Shortly after, this funding started to shrink and became conditional, which pushed universities into a global competition to increase their student base and attract funds to sustain their operations. Toward mid of the 20th century, with the de-industrialization of cities and the attempts to control HEIs through public funding regulations, universities seem to have overlooked their connection with their cities. They neglected their territory, which deprived local communities of fully benefiting from their contributions (CUC, 2019; Goddard & Kempton, 2016). However, globalization could not eradicate the value of the territory and the role of universities in achieving regional development. With the changes in public funding regulations, which imposed an increased reliance on taxpayers and students, and the linking of research funding to solving local societal challenges, it became expected from universities to use some of their incoming funds to benefit the wider public, especially with the rising inquiries on the relevance of university practices to the surrounding they inhabit. The need for a place-based focus and support for regional development led to the resurgence of a 'modern' civic university, and came the time to revive this notion in a global economy and society (Goddard, 2009).

The civic university as described by Goddard & Kempton (2016) incorporates teaching, research, and social engagement into the wider world in a mutually beneficial way. By aligning its local and global roles, the civic university aims to graduate well-versed citizens and to address local and global societal issues, without affecting the quality of education, while keeping a flexible border between university and society. This notion aligns with Delanty's (2001) arguments around the crucial role of universities in bridging industries', markets' and society's needs by engaging a larger

constituent of society in the knowledge production process. He states "*while it is true that the new production of knowledge is dominated by the instrumentalization of knowledge and that as a result the traditional role of the university has been undermined, it is now in a position to serve social goals more fully than previously when other goals were more prominent"* (Delanty, 2001, p.113). However, Craig Calhoun (2006) appears less optimistic about this civic role considering organizational and cultural barriers that affect territorial development. Universities are having difficulty producing relevant knowledge in its content and applicability while preserving excellence (exclusivity) and open access, especially that currently, excellence in research and its accessibility are more rewarding in the knowledge production and dissemination (Calhoun, 2006).

The civic university is built on a systematic engagement formalized through a signed agreement, which can include more than one university or educational institution. This model is based on analyzing and understanding the local communities' needs, as well as the university's historical, geographical, and cultural components that shape its existence, and setting clear objectives and priorities, which will guide the allocation of resources and the collaboration with other anchor institutions, local businesses and authorities (CUC, 2019). It is worth noting the difference between a civically engaged university and a civic university: "*A true civic university has a clear vision strategy, rooted in analysis, which explains what, why and how its activity adds up to a civic role...and how they have organized themselves to achieve their civic aims*" (CUC, 2019, p.8). Goddard and Kempton (2016) established seven dimensions of the civic university encompassing active engagement with the global and local surroundings, through a comprehensive approach at the institutional level, with a sense of place, an awareness of its roles and capabilities, a motivation to influence the wider world, using innovative engagement practices, with transparency and accountability toward all stakeholders. Succeeding in fulfilling its role as a 'civic' university depends, not only on the university efforts, but also on the capacity of its local collaborators, which requires an effective alliance with main partners in the public and private sectors in the city (Goddard & Kempton, 2016).

As the race of rankings, the global market forces, and the constrained funding continue to burden universities, with little attention given to the mutual benefits of engaging with the outer world, universities and local authorities ought to find common interest areas, identify local and global issues with underlying opportunities for social and economic development, and establish effective partnerships accordingly. The civic university, with a strong institutional leadership, provides a model able to reduce the barriers between university and its surrounding, and to create balance

among developing the local community, addressing the competitiveness needs, and the global social challenges (Goddard & Kempton, 2016; Goddard & Vallance, 2011). It simply establishes a dynamic relationship between university and society.

3.4.3 Scholarship of Engagement

Higher education institutions have been witnessing an ongoing identity crisis, and despite the growing number of universities serving an expanding number of students, the majority of these institutions were emulating few prominent ones. In 1987, Lynton and Elman portrayed this state by "*all universities adopt the goals and measures appropriate for the few larger institutions with ample universities"* (p.11). Few years later, Boyer (1997, p.54) stated that "*a single model of scholarship came to dominate the system, and the nation's higher learning institutions increasingly have become more imitative than distinctive*". He added, "*Mission becomes blurred, standards of research are compromised, and the quality of teaching and learning is disturbingly diminished*" (Boyer, 1997, p.55). Amidst this crisis, faculty and administrators geared their efforts toward achieving uniform missions that might not be suitable to their unique context. Universities overlooked their distinctive potential and missed the opportunity of exploring their own resources and capacity in service of society. The world of academia seemed detached from society and its pressing issues, focusing mainly on students' credentialing and faculty tenure. With the rising concerns about the quality of teaching and the declining value accorded to it for the sake of research, the role of academics and their contributions were brought to light.

Lynton and Elman (1987) called for expanding the academic responsibilities, whereby faculty not only produce basic research, but also focus on disseminating it to students and to the outer world through interdepartmental collaborations and outreach activities, which are expected to enhance faculty satisfaction especially for those with less interest in research. Similarly, the focus on faculty role and its vital effect on the past, present, and the future of the institution have been argued by Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Chancellor of the State University of NY, in his book "*Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate"* in 1990. Boyer reflected on the shifting priorities within academia along with a narrower faculty reward system that favours research at the expense of teaching and service, which backfires on multiple stakeholders. Students' quality of education and their learning experience as a whole are affected when less attention is given to teaching. Faculty devoted to teaching and service become less satisfied/motivated/secure as promotion and tenure are closely tied to research. The effect won't spare the nation too, when the university goals focus on research and knowledge

production more than bridging the gap between academia and society through knowledge dissemination and application, to solve emerging societal, economic and environmental challenges (Boyer, 1997).

Boyer redefines the term 'scholarship' to reflect the full scope of faculty functions, which encompasses four distinct, yet interrelated mandates: the "*scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching*'' (Boyer 1997, p.16). The scholarship of discovery is concerned with the discipline-based research and free investigation executed for the sake of knowledge. The scholarship of integration is linked to research, giving meaning to its findings by interpreting them and putting them into larger contexts. Integration is becoming crucial, as multidisciplinarity is needed for researchers to address complex problems. Since universities are expected to account for the needs of society, the scholarship of application is related to applying knowledge to serve society and solve pressing issues responsibly. It is also concerned with service activities closely linked to a faculty's field of knowledge and expertise "*where theory and practice vitally interact, and one renews the other*", although the concept of 'service' in academia is broad and limitless (Boyer, 1997, p.23). Last is the scholarship of teaching, which is the main function that keeps the cycle of knowledge ongoing. These interrelated functions are in a constant interaction and together, they define the scope of 'scholarship'. Therefore, the faculty reward system should account for, and compensate the richness of their potential in relation to the four mandates, not only to research. This would inject dynamism and vigour into universities, hence into the whole country.

However, research has been prioritized at many institutions, and faculty promotion and tenure are being increasingly tied to research productivity, sometimes at the expense of quality, as quantity is easier to measure. This trend is growing exponentially with research impact being assigned as a vital component with considerable weight in the university rankings (20% in QS World University Rankings and 30% in Times Higher Education). The devaluation of any academic obligation other than research is affecting faculty motivation to engage in creative and innovative teaching, which reflects on the quality of education. It is also reducing faculty drive to take part in outreach activities and civic engagement within and outside the borders of university (Boyer, 1997).

While universities are expected to contribute to society through teaching, research, and service, to ensure their prosperity, Boyer invites them to identify their distinct goals and link them to the faculty reward system in a way that serves their own purposes. Moreover, Boyer's efforts to

redefine scholarship and his focus on the faculty time issue were argued by Davis and Chandler (1998, p.23-24), on the basis that he overlooked the "*socioeconomic context of the universities and the purposes universities have historically served*". They consider Boyer's reward system as a means to control faculty rather than to impact the quality of their teaching and research. For them, internal drive, socioeconomic security, and freedom to make academic choices would better advance scholarship. They also highlighted an issue disregarded by Boyer, although it is part of the scholarship problem: The hierarchical structure of the university, which has deprived faculty of their decision-making power and with it, their ability to cultivate change. Davis and Chandler (1998) advocate for a values-driven structure instead of a system ruled by instructions and directives.

Eugene Rice (2002, p.7) noted that "*faculty scholarship was regarded by all too many as fundamentally disconnected from the larger purposes of American society*". To that effect, universities not only need to avoid imitating other institutions and set their distinct missions by capitalizing on their own context, resources, and capabilities. They also ought to have a fair valuation of the diverse faculty functions from scholarship of discovery, to integration, application and teaching, which should be linked to a balanced reward system and aligned with the institution's missions. In addition to empowering faculty by adopting a heterarchical structure with a democratic and participative decision-making power for all involved parties. Only then, universities can effectively contribute to society and fulfil their missions described by academic leaders—centuries ago— by 'practicality' and 'serviceability', or as Boyer calls it 'the scholarship of engagement'.

In this context, universities were classified based on their deep involvement and community engagement through teaching, research, and outreach (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.). John Saltmarsh and Mathew Hartley (2011) developed another typology, which recognizes four types of universities based on their level of engagement with the community: community-centered, collaborative, curricular, and civic-minded. These typologies have contributed to the definition and promotion of community engagement within universities, and encouraged them to prioritize their relationships with their territories.

3.4.4 Triple and Quadruple Helix

Along the traditional roles of teaching and research, universities' contribution to economic welfare has been witnessing a growing attention with a focus on technology transfer through commercialization and partnerships with the private, public, and third sector. A large-scale study

of 22,170 respondents conducted in 2008-2009 among scholars in the UK, revealed that most of the academics from diverse disciplines (not restricted to STEM) are involved in a way or another in knowledge exchange and interaction with parties outside university borders locally, regionally, and internationally (Abreu et al., 2009). For the respondents, academic freedom is vital to achieve society's welfare, while social engagement in its various ways reinforces teaching and research.

In today's knowledge economy, the extended role of universities in boosting innovation and economic development —known as the 'third mission'—has been further underlined with the Triple Helix model, developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff in the 1990s. This model was inspired by the university–industry–government collaboration in 1920 to revive the deteriorating economy of New England after World War I (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017). The Triple Helix presented universities as entrepreneurial institutions with primary role in regional advancement and innovation (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2007). Although some researchers called upon universities to limit their missions to teaching and research, and to let go of their 'third mission' (Benner & Sandstrom, 2000), arguing that technology transfer through patents is incurring costs instead of flowing freely from universities to industry (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000).

The Triple Helix model is based on various collaboration scenarios among university-industry-government to achieve technological and socioeconomic development. The university becomes a main actor in regional innovation in a 'university-pushed model' where government and industry are relatively weak. The government acts as main player leading and controlling the initiation of social innovation projects in a 'government pulled-model'. While industry and large firms take the lead in the 'corporation-led model' of Triple Helix (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2007). The latter is presented as an analytical model, which not only defines and examines the dynamics of the diverse institutional systems and policy models, but also describes the three spheres' reciprocal communication, knowledge production, and usage throughout the innovation procedures (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1998, 2000). This model has gained universal acceptance as the place of knowledge production (university) and application (industries and society) are increasingly seen connected, even in less research-intensive regions. Within this scope, universities would sustain their supremacy provided they preserve their core mission—teaching, tied to research and economic growth (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). Their competitive advantage lies in being incubators for change and innovation, capitalizing on the continuous generation of human capital. The constant flow of students bringing in new ideas as they enrol, and transferring their knowledge with them after graduation grants universities a leading entrepreneurial role among other institutions

(Etzkowitz, 2002; Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2007), even in developing nations where universities exist regardless if the industries there, lack resources and capabilities.

Throughout their interaction with each other in a 'non-linear' model, the three helices perform their conventional roles, and exchange roles too, while preserving their identities and protecting their existence (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1998; Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2007). The university echoes businesses and promotes the establishment of new firms from research. Corporations follow academic models by adopting advanced trainings and knowledge sharing. While government takes the role of industry by funding promising businesses. Along these dynamic interrelationships, the Triple Helix focuses on the university as a key actor with proactive role in technology and innovation, contradicting the theories that underpin the government or industry as incubators for innovation (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1998; Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017).

Brannback et al. (2008) challenged the Triple Helix, questioning this top-down model of innovation systems, which excludes entrepreneurs from the micro-level. According to their study, the three partners (university-industry-government) are not well incorporated in spite of numerous attempts. In addition, entrepreneurs and innovators either feel discarded, or avoid collaboration with governmental players. They conclude by proposing an opposing bottom-up model of regional innovations. Moreover, despite the key role accorded to universities in leading the collaboration and communication among the three spheres, Uyarra (2010) argues that Etzkowitz seems to undervalue the tensions and conflicts, which are expected to arise among the various collaborators in a Triple Helix model. He states that a "*new equilibrium of overlapping institutional spheres [. . .] in which collaborations and rules for interaction are more easily understood and negotiated*" (Etzkowitz, 2000, p.316), without providing further description on how these tensions can be tackled. Similarly, a recent study by Salomaa, Fonseca, Nieth, and Benneworth (2020) highlights the tensions that might arise in the partnership of the three helices, and which seems overlooked within the fast-expanding Triple Helix worldwide. The relationship among university-industry-government is quite complex, not as smooth as it seems, notably in countries where this collaboration is not common and has no precedent. The organizational structure of the university might challenge the establishment of external partnerships when the goals and interests of the university leadership differ from the top down. Similarly, when individual efforts are invested in regional activities while university managers refrain from providing support, which makes it difficult to upscale small individual contributions to a university-wide collaboration in regional innovation projects. In addition, the financial constraints make it difficult for universities to engage

in long-term investments in regional partnerships except for sustainable activities. Based on case studies in five inadequate Triple Helix environments, Salomaa et al. (2020) pinpointed the tensions that challenge the establishment of Triple Helix relationships and underlined the role of universities in managing these strains and aligning diverging goals, standards, and values among collaborators.

Furthermore, research by Nsanzumuhire and Groot (2020) examines the university-industry relationship in developed and developing countries by analyzing 68 publications on this topic. This study depicts the different communication channels between both parties including bi-directional, traditional, commercial (patent, license, spin-off) and service channels, with the commercial channel classified as the least vital and least favoured by both academics and businesses. It also identifies three forms of application procedures: educational, academic entrepreneurship, and research collaboration, where educational collaboration is considered the least important. Additionally, it emphasizes the value of constant knowledge transmission in contrast with the conventional linear model, and pinpoints the barriers to the university-industry partnership, some of which are internal or external, institutional or contextual, while others are related to cultural disparity, attributes of the produced knowledge, academics' network of connections, among others. The study categorizes the barriers into misalignment barriers, motivation related barriers, capability related barriers, governance related barriers, and contextual barriers, with differences noted between developed and developing countries.

Carayannis and Campbell (2009) advanced the Quadruple Helix model by including a fourth component— civil society and social partners— to account for the democracy's effect on innovation, which is not integrated in the Triple Helix theory. The Quadruple Helix focuses not only on the top-down policies and operations in the relationship among government-university-industry (as the Triple Helix does), but also on the bottom-up and middle-up community-oriented initiatives, which helps shaping the relationship among the three constituents, making it more inclusive and effective (Park, 2014). This introduces society as a vital constituent in the innovation process, where the co-creation between the four helices in a context of collaboration, partnerships, and conducive relationships creates value, and fosters sustainable economic development (Afonso et al., 2012).

As the Triple Helix model was mostly studied in Western Countries (Khan & Park, 2012), the Quadruple Helix model appears to be global since it promotes a knowledge-based innovation that aligns with the growth of democratic institutions in diverse contexts (political, economic, social,

and technological) (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009). This calls for attention to the contextual environment and its relevant challenges in order to achieve social transformation and the desired regional development.

3.4.5 Regional Innovation Systems

Universities are experiencing a growing pressure to stimulate economic development and social welfare, in addition to teaching and research. They are assigned a regional mission, which involves regional innovation and entrepreneurship to achieve the aspired contributions. The regional innovation systems are a relatively new concept with growing importance as a competitive element in the global economy. It has developed from regional science and economic geography; the term was first introduced by Philip Cooke in 1992. Successful examples such as the 'Third Italy' (Asheim, 2000) and Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 1994) underline the importance of the 'regional' aspect in the developing clusters where learning and knowledge practices are built on a close connection with society, which constitutes a favourable context for regional innovation systems leading to economic development (Asheim, 2002; Asheim & Isaksen, 2002).

Cooke defines the regional innovation systems as the "*interacting knowledge generation and exploitation subsystems linked to global, national and other regional systems*" (Cooke, 2004, p.3). Literature on this topic considers innovation as a "*collective process where regional innovation emerges from localized, innovation-related and institutionally supported networks*" (Uyarra, 2010, p.1236). Asheim and Coenen (2005) in their discussion on the types of regional innovation systems, state that these models encompass diverse sectors without any specificity, presuming that businesses and research institutions collaborate systematically. They describe a variety of regional innovation systems following a narrow or broad understanding of the concept. From the narrow perspective, the Triple Helix model is the best representation of a regional innovation system integrating universities, public and private organizations, and firms in a top-down model (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). Whereas a broader view encompasses '*all parts and aspects of the economic structure and the institutional set-up affecting learning as well as searching and exploring*' (Lundvall, 1992, p.12) in a bottom-up collaborative model. Asheim and Coenen (2005) also differentiate between the clusters that are narrower and sector-specific, and the regional innovation systems, which are more general and can surpass several sectors. In addition, they identify different mechanisms for establishing regional innovation systems depending on the industries' analytic or synthetic knowledge-based approach.

In the regional innovation systems, markets drive the development and commercialization of scientific knowledge and innovations. This process is supported to a great extent by large national budgets for basic research funding, mostly when big companies abstain from taking risks in such investments. For Cooke (2001), this major dependence on the public sector indicating the weakness (if not failure) of the market, is the main reason behind the gap between Europe's and US' regional innovation systems. The latter presents an exemplary performance of the regional innovation systems highly relying on the private sector, with an innovation policy that encourages the development of private institutions, motivated by profit-making to invest in commercial innovation.

As for universities' role in regional innovation systems, it has expanded from an indirect contribution through spillovers from teaching and research, to a third mission based on a formal engagement with society to drive regional socio-economic development (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000; Goddard & Chatterton, 1999; Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 1998; Uyarra, 2010). It is worth noting that much of the literature on universities' role in regional innovation revolves around research universities and large institutions based in the cities (Charles, 2016). Universities' collaboration with industry through territorial networks of corporates and various entities, as well as the institutionalization of 'commercial' actions align much with their mission of social engagement (Uyarra, 2010). Their contribution to regional development varies depending on their historical background and the political-economic system in the region (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000). Their lack of conformity with the regional capacity affects their engagement, and their lack of effective collaboration with local partners from firms to government and other parties would incur losses (Arbo & Benneworth, 2007). Universities' role in driving regional innovation is much challenged by the multifaceted relationship between national and regional agendas that might conflict or overlap creating tensions, institutional goals and resources, and the specificity of the region (Pinheiro et al., 2016). While the contribution of small/rural university campuses is obstructed by their size and lack of resources and specialization. Their role is reduced to producing an educated workforce, in addition to limited collaboration opportunities with local businesses and industries through niche clusters (Charles, 2016). As regional policies on funding, governance, and public regulations affect universities' social engagement (Puukka et al., 2013), hence their contribution to regional innovation, it is essential to account for the regional context in all its aspects, and develop appropriate regulations that ensure effective partnerships toward achieving regional innovation.

3.4.6 New Knowledge Production (Knowledge Mode 2)

The modern society has been witnessing a change in the mode of knowledge production and a transition toward applied research. In fact, the emerging social and environmental challenges and the increased awareness about the roles of universities and their ability to push forward the social and economic development, compelled more relevance and social accountability in knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994; Muller, 1999). This transformation led to the emergence of 'Mode 2', which was introduced by Gibbons and his colleagues in their book '*The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Sciences and Research'* (1994), where they distinguish between the traditional academic research 'Mode 1' and the new mode of knowledge production in social sciences, humanities, science and technology. They also describe the attributes of each mode and highlight their similarities and variations.

While the disciplinary-based research—Mode 1 is mostly conducted within universities to produce knowledge regardless of the applicability of its outcomes, Mode 2 research is performed with consideration for its application and usefulness, as well as the interests of all concerned parties from the starting point. In this context-driven mode of research, science surpasses commercial goals and goes beyond market considerations to spread throughout society in what is known by 'socially distributed knowledge' (Gibbons et al., 1994). The increasing need for social relevance and accountability was coupled with a growing number of individuals motivated to account for the interests of the public and effecting positive impact through research outcomes. This led to a greater reflexivity among researchers and influenced their agendas, priorities, and the process of conducting research. In this context, the impact-sensitive research cannot be based solely on science or technology, and can only be generated and understood within its social and cultural settings (Giroux, 1999), hence the importance of multidisciplinary research teams. In contrast with Mode 1 that is homogeneous and institutionalized, Mode 2 is characterized by its transdisciplinarity and heterogeneity, as it gathers temporary teams from different disciplines, with diverse skills and backgrounds, working together on sites (inside or outside universities) to solve particular issues. As for quality control, it seems more challenging in Mode 2 due to the multidisciplinarity. Quality cannot be assessed solely through peer review evaluation of its contribution to the advancement of a particular discipline, as in Mode 1. Additional elements (social, political, economic) related to application are taken into account, such as cost-effectiveness and social acceptability among others. This broadness of the evaluation system, although it might affect the quality of work (Gibbons et al., 1994), however it allows constant assessment, and grants some flexibility in dealing with the unforeseen, and adjusting to the alterations occurring within the research context (Waghid, 2002).

Gibbons et al. (1994) presented Mode 2 as a coherent knowledge production with its attributes as a socially distributed knowledge, transdisciplinary, heterogeneous, socially accountable, and reflexive, with a new way of quality control. It is presented as a supplement, growing out of the traditional Mode 1 rather than a replacement of it (Gibbons et al. 1994; Muller, 1999; Waghid, 2002). Disciplinary research Mode 1 will continue to exist and provide a rigorous base for Mode 2 (Muller, 1999). This complementary relationship between knowledge production Mode 1 and Mode 2 was expressed by Gibbons (1998, p.54) as follows:

> "*To meet both national and community needs a different organization of knowledge production than Mode 1 is required. The elements of that organization lie not necessarily in the wholesale abandonment of Mode 1, but rather in the developing of linkages between Mode 1 and Mode 2".*

With the transition toward Mode 2, Gibbons (1998) declared that the views promoting universities' role in advancing society and enhancing people's quality of life through knowledge production have replaced the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake as advocated by Newman. However, this shift had some implications on universities, which are expected to supplant the disciplinary-based research with innovative applied research to address more complex societal issues (Subotzky, 1999). Moreover, universities have lost their supremacy as knowledge producers now that knowledge generation is taking place at other sites too (government, industrial laboratories, think-tanks, etc.). In addition, knowledge in the context of application became an essential component of accredited programs, the latter witnessing an increased flexibility and customization to meet the various needs of society, which challenges universities to adjust accordingly (Scott, 1995). Yet, Mode 2 allows the concurrence of a multitude of disciplines and fosters a synergy among the diverse working teams (Waghid, 2002).

Along the transition from Mode 1 to Mode 2 knowledge production, universities are expected to balance between the freedom of research as a means to generate new knowledge, and the social relevance of this knowledge and its practicality to solve pressing issues (Waghid, 2002). This will not only bridge the gap between universities and society, but will also facilitate the flow of research funding from diverse resources, which would compensate for the constrained public funding.

3.4.7 Entrepreneurial University

The exponential growth in the number of students and their diverging needs according to their age groups, along with the decreasing public funding, compelled universities to explore new practices in generating income and fulfilling the expectations of their diverse stakeholders. In 1983, Henry

Etzkowitz introduced the American entrepreneurial universities, which opted for research commercialization as a new source of revenue facing the rising costs and limited financial resources (Etzkowitz, 1983). Then in 1998, Burton Clark, presented the 'Entrepreneurial' university as the answer to financial challenges burdening universities. He defines this concept through examining the experience of five European universities, which adopted an entrepreneurial approach in transforming their institutions.

In his research, Clark presents five fundamental elements, which he sets as the basis for any organizational change toward becoming an entrepreneurial university, encompassing "*a strengthened steering core, an enhanced development periphery, a discretionary funding base, a stimulated academic heartland and entrepreneurial belief*" (Clark, 2003, p.101). He advocates an anticipated success and advantages such as enhanced university identity, even with a partial shift toward entrepreneurship, without addressing issues related to the procedures or the challenges faced throughout the process, and while overlooking the risk of failure included in the concept of 'entrepreneurship' (Smith, 1999). Clark (2003) also argues that a clear sense of direction, a sound leadership, and a margin of independence from public governance, are crucial to sustain the entrepreneurial drive of the institution. He noted that most of the universities that successfully adopted this concept, purposefully focused on increasing their research stream in order to enhance their reputation, solicit external funds, and engage their scholars in outside activities. However, his research tackled mostly public universities without accounting for the growing number of private universities in several countries (Altbach, 2006). While Marginson (2000) scrutinizes the entrepreneurial university and pinpoints its limitations. In this model, leaders seem disconnected from the daily life of the institution, being immersed with strategic planning and external partnerships. Moreover, the new culture and practices incur academic resistance, creating tension within the institution and weakening not only the internal community, but also its social values, as the primary purpose of the entrepreneurial university is to serve its corporate rather than social, economic, and cultural goals. This calls for creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem reinforced by experienced faculty to develop and support students with entrepreneurial mindset and skills toward achieving a sustainable society (Gray et al., 2020; Madichie et al., 2020).

Etzkowitz (2013) describes three stages for the evolution of the entrepreneurial university. The first phase aligns with Clark's understanding for the concept, as it starts with raising income from diverse resources such as students' tuition, donations, and grants facilitated by their alumni associations and fundraising units. The second one builds on the university's potential of

technology transfer and the commercialization of patents and research. While the third stage focuses on industry and government partnerships toward expanding regional innovation, while keeping a margin of freedom in the relationship with these spheres (Etzkowitz, 2013). For him, the entrepreneurial university combines teaching and research, and advances them to the next level, "*integrating forward and reverse linear models into a renewed 'social contract' between the university and the larger society, for creating economic and social enterprises as the quid pro quo for large-scale funding of the academic enterprise*" (Etzkowitz, 2013, p.507).

A study conducted by Nieth and Benneworth (2020) pinpoints the vital role of regional policy and its implications for the entrepreneurial university to contribute to regional development. They contend that regional policy interventions are expected to encourage universities' long-term support for academics and institutional entrepreneurs as they co-create, test, and convert their intangible ideas into impactful tangible projects. This will promote entrepreneurship activities at the institutional level and boost regional advancement. While James et al. (2017) noted the role of research-led entrepreneurial university and developing entrepreneurial skills, alongside other elements such as entrepreneurial leadership, inclusivity, lifelong learning, and partnerships, altogether leading to change and building entrepreneurial learning city regions.

By endorsing entrepreneurship and innovation, universities not only fulfil their third mission of achieving economic development, but also integrate entrepreneurialism into their teaching and research, which enhances their identity (Sam & van der Sijde, 2014), their reputation, and the university community's reputation (Guerrero et al., 2016). The entrepreneurial university model first introduced by Clark seems to be the business model that ensures financial independence by exploiting teaching and research facing the shrinking public funding, and in response to the globalization and internationalization affecting the educational market.

3.4.8 Anchor Institutions

Driven by globalization, deindustrialization, and neoliberal systems, the shift from a manufacturing-based economy toward a knowledge economy, which started end of the 1960s, along with a contracted public governance, had a toll on the United States, leaving behind cities and neighbourhoods struggling with unemployment, poverty, and poor education. As these conditions aggravated after 1970, universities and hospitals (eds and meds) in these localities were compelled to fulfil their public service mission by supporting and revitalizing their deprived surroundings (Taylor & Luter, 2013). Yet, universities' early engagement remained shallow with

little contributions, as many repelled effecting the needed changes to allow an effective collaboration with the public sector and other local institutions (Task Force on Anchor Institutions, 2009). As of the 1990s, the rise of the scholarship of engagement with Ernest Boyer motivated a number of HEIs and their faculty to accomplish their mission by investing efforts in the enhancement of their surroundings, which would serve their interest too. Universities as immobile institutions, rooted in space, cannot avoid or deter the impact of locally arising issues on their activities. Hence, partnering with local institutions to address the emerging social and economic challenges effectively seemed an ultimate solution, especially with the limited resources in struggling areas (Taylor & Luter, 2013). The growing openness of universities to collaborate with local partners on solving societal issues gave birth to the concept of 'anchor institutions' in 2001 at the Aspen Institution Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives. Fulbright-Anderson, Auspos and Anderson (2001, p.1) defined these 'fixed assets' as anchor institutions "*that have a significant infrastructure investment in a specific community and are therefore unlikely to move"*. Among the large organizations considered as anchor institutions, we can mostly recognize universities, medical centers, and hospitals, which are ingrained in place and have a great potential to impact their host communities (Adams, 2003).

Literature on this concept includes more than forty definitions of the term 'anchor institutions', with commonalities and differences among them. They all agree on key elements related to the scale, the generally non-profit nature, and most importantly the spatial immobility of these institutions, which bind them to the place where they reside and grant them a central role in the development of the local economy (Taylor & Luter, 2013). However, researchers had diverging views concerning the anchor institutions' missions. A report by The Work Foundation (Morris et al., 2010) argued that anchor institutions' missions do not necessarily include a component with social scope, nor do they have local economic development as a key goal. Their influence derives mainly from their scale, embeddedness in place, and their local network, which makes them a "*sticky capital*" to rely on when designing local economic development strategies (Morris et al., 2010, p.3). However, in their book '*The Road Half-Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads*', Rita Hodges and Steve Dubb (2012) describe anchor institutions as those that "*intentionally and strategically deploy the economic, human, and intellectual capital of institutions to improve the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside*" (2012, Foreword). In their definition, they emphasize the importance of working willingly toward bettering the local community, and setting this mission at the heart of their strategies and actions. Otherwise, institutions' efforts would not necessarily enhance the quality of life in struggling areas; it might

even make it worse despite the expansion of the institution itself (Hodges & Dubb, 2012). Here appears the importance of organizational leadership, adoption, and implementation of social responsibility. Similarly, Taylor and Luter (2013) claim that anchor institutions could stimulate economic development provided they are willing to assume a 'desirable' mission with a purpose of social justice, equity and democracy. To achieve their mission, anchor institutions should go through a cultural transformation that echoes social responsibility and 'serving a larger purpose'.

The anchor institutions are considered as agents of change in their host—urban and rural—communities through jobs creation, procurement and purchase of supplies, real estate investments, in addition to supplying a skilled workforce to local industries and businesses, which stimulates local economic growth and increases the cities' competitiveness in urban economies (Adams, 2003). However, their efforts are challenged by several issues. Dubb, Mckinley and Howard (2013) indicated that, despite the existence of metrics to assess the economic development of communities, there is a lack of sufficient tools to examine and evaluate the long-term impact of the anchored mission, which impedes accountability, transparency, and amendment of strategies as needed. In addition to two major constraints represented by the community skepticism and the risk of mission's discontinuity with the change of leadership, hence the need for an institutionalization of the anchored mission. Moreover, the public austerity in many countries has been compelling universities to seek alternative funding resources by relying on student tuitions or partnerships with industries and other organizations. With the introduction of 'business-like' culture and practices into the three missions of university: teaching, research, and service, the efforts of anchor institutions to achieve local communities' wellbeing are jeopardized by the emergence of the entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1998; Etzkowitz et al., 2000) and the reshuffling of university priorities, where income generation comes first. To reverse this effect, "*anchor institutions will need to marry social responsibility and income generation*" (Taylor & Luter, 2013, p.17) by aligning their income generation approaches with their social responsibility principles. Amidst the rising financial constraints and economic difficulties, anchor institutions remain vital to establish effective partnerships, solve emerging societal issues, and advance local communities.

3.4.9 Stewardship of Place

While some universities juggled their priorities among teaching, research, or other activities in an attempt to be 'all things to all people', they presented mixed messages, a non-coherent identity, and lost efforts and resources. With this unclarity in HEIs' vision and missions, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) established a task force in 2002, that

suggested universities as ‘stewards of place’. This novel perspective developed a new vision for universities and guided their practices toward achieving regional and workforce development. The stewardship of place aimed at balancing teaching, research, and social engagement with the local and regional communities’ needs, while maintaining universities’ main role of providing quality education. In their publication ‘*Operationalizing Stewards of Place*’ (2015), the AASCU provided university leaders with a roadmap on how to advance while contributing to the regional and economic development, based on an objective evaluation of the institutional and regional resources, opportunities, needs, and level of maturity. Accordingly, universities’ action plans will be built on a clear set of goals, deep knowledge of the territory, strategic long-term planning, and an expanded scope of partnerships with the aim of benefiting the regional community and developing the workforce, rather than focusing on institutional goals detached from the surrounding or any binding partnerships (AASCU, 2015). Universities are expected to focus on enhancing graduates’ career readiness and lifelong learning. By identifying employers’ needs and customizing the learning experience accordingly, universities bridge the gap between academia and the job market, boost graduates’ employability and build a skilled workforce. With these efforts geared toward advancing regional and economic development, universities must assess potential risks and adopt policies and legislations that protect their academic body from any risks related to innovative research patent and technology transfer. Finally, the AASCU monograph described diverse metrics to measure the progress of regional and workforce development efforts, and to report the success of contributions that are valued by the various stakeholders.

Similar to the Kellogg Commission, the AASCU presented student engagement as a key element for institutional success as well as regional advancement. They linked students’ success and engagement to the economic and workforce development through community-oriented research, outreach, and high-impact initiatives. By securing an advanced technological infrastructure that facilitates STEM and engineering undergraduate research, as well as a favourable environment that encourages internships, capstone projects, and other outreach and civic engagement activities, universities can effectively exploit student engagement to contribute to the regional development (AACSU, 2015). According to AASCU, a successful cultural transformation does not occur solely through outreach activities that address social challenges, as well as a re-designed curriculum and meaningful research that align interests and academic priorities with the regional needs. The institutionalization of student-engagement requires the buy-in and support from various internal stakeholders, such as faculty and staff members. Yet, their engagement must occur at the departmental level rather than individually. University leaders ought to create synergy and

alignment among organizational objectives, students' learning outcomes, faculty scholarly agendas, and community priorities. Then, ultimate results can be achieved by implementing jointly devised appropriate policies and procedures that facilitate execution.

Aside from student engagement, AASCU promoted entrepreneurial activities as a key contributor to the economic advancement. Developing academic programs that enhance students' entrepreneurial knowledge and competences, and providing them with opportunities to practice entrepreneurship, leads to further economic growth linked to innovation especially in tech-based industries. Yet, this stream is challenged mainly by securing funding resources, as well as experienced faculty's time and support.

AASCU also underlined the importance of developing the 'right' partnerships within regional and international communities. Building on a deep understanding of the institution's resources and capabilities, coupled with clear and consistent communication strategies, universities would benefit much from collaborating and expanding their network through public and private partnerships that support the development of their innovative and entrepreneurial activities. In this regard, a close collaboration, mostly with technology and science related industries, is mutually beneficial for both parties. Through this partnership, universities will have direct access to identify the industry's needs. By customizing their curriculum and research accordingly, universities will gain the industry's trust and financial support, which will leverage their innovation and entrepreneurship, and will increase their graduates' employability as they supply the job market with highly equipped, skilled human capital.

The AASCU monograph highlighted the value of innovation, entrepreneurship, and business acceleration involving academic members, which are motivated to support research agendas and to lead spin-offs through their network and connections outside the university borders.

Lastly, it discussed the international dimension in the outreach and regional engagement as an emerging component with a focus on social justice and the advancement of human rights. This aspect is challenged by identifying appropriate partnerships while accounting for cultural differences and legal compliance issues (AASCU, 2015). They concluded by underlining the importance of using metrics to evaluate universities' efforts and translate the value of their regional and economic contributions into data legible by internal and external stakeholders. There exist different sets of metrics developed by various entities; the choice depends on the awareness of the

link between the university's set goals and the projected outcomes (APLU CICEP, 2014) that the institution wants to convey to the stakeholders.

In brief, universities members in AASCU recognize more than ever the scope of their role and effective contribution to the regional and economic development. As most of their student body are members of the local community, their graduates are hired within the region, and most of their research largely tackles regional challenges. These universities realize the importance of strong collaboration and partnerships with local authorities and regional businesses to nurture innovation, support entrepreneurial activities, stimulate the creation of jobs, and sustain the economic growth. Relying on metrics for the assessment of their efforts is key to corroborate their regional contribution and convey their story in the most effective way.

The 'stewards of place' appears a continuity of the concept of land-grant universities, advocating for engagement defined by the community's needs, focused on students' development, and supported by internal stakeholders' buy-in and effective partnerships. The AASCU seems to have built its work on the land-grant universities' mission, and advanced it further by developing detailed guidelines for their members to direct and guide their steps.

3.5 University Social Responsibility (USR)

Social responsibility has been widely discussed in the business industry, with the establishment of numerous definitions, applications, processes, standards and certifications; it appeared as an attempt to redefine the nature of businesses and to bring them closer to society by following ethical standards and accounting for their operations' social and environmental impacts. Recent decades have witnessed a considerable advancement in this field expressed through the change in management strategies with greater accountability toward stakeholders, implied by the 'Stakeholder Theory' (Freeman, 1984) and the incorporation of the 'Triple Bottom Line' (Elkington, 1997), adding social and environmental elements to the evaluation of companies' financial performance. In addition to the establishment of new laws reinforcing companies' social responsibility (e.g. The 2001 New Economic Regulations in France that imposed accounting for and reporting the company's social and environmental effects), and the creation of new standards and impact measurements with social and environmental indicators (The Global Reporting Initiative GRI, ISO 14000, etc.), and the formation of corporate alliances with international organizations or NGOs (e.g. UN Global Compact) (Vallaeys, 2007). The Stakeholder Theory in

which this research is grounded, will be discussed elaborately in a dedicated section, later in this chapter.

At times, social responsibility has been confused with philanthropy, creating debates around the topic. Clearing this misconception is crucial to limit the misleading abuse by some companies that claim being socially responsible based on their philanthropic actions, while having unethical business operations (ENRON which had a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department). Philanthropic activities of a company are perceived as an 'addition', not at the core functions of an organization. While social responsibility represents a 'management philosophy' applied to the company's daily operations across all levels in fulfilment of its commitment toward the welfare of the society. According to Vallaeys (2007), this concept relies heavily on practicing the 'good governance' ensuring consistency among the company's mission, practices, national laws, and international standards, promoting accountability, ethics and transparency in reporting to reduce corruption risks. It also promotes dialogue with stakeholders, accounts for their interests, and responds to their needs, thus avoiding organization's self-centeredness. Moreover, in its promotion for sustainable development, social responsibility requires the company to identify and assess the social and environmental footprints resulting from its daily operations, to maximize its positive effects and to reduce any negative impacts to decent and legally accepted levels. Finally, social responsibility encourages alliances and collaboration, and invites organizations to engage proactively in addressing social and environmental issues, each according to its operations and its type of business.

The application of this management philosophy was further supported by the creation of standards, measurement instruments, declarations (the Global Compact, the Human Rights Declaration, etc.), and specialized agencies to guide and facilitate businesses' social integration.

3.5.1 Understanding of the USR Concept, Importance, and Practices

In higher education, although universities' interrelationship with their surrounding and their social engagement existed since the establishment of these institutions, university social responsibility has been presented as a 'new philosophy of university management', which aspires to renew its social contract and develop innovative sustainable solutions to emerging challenges in today's global world (Vallaeys, 2007).

The USR concept was first established in early 2001 in Chile through a country project titled Universidad Construye Pais' [The University Builds the Country] initiated by an alliance between the AVINA Group and thirteen Chilean universities with the purpose of creating major changes toward regional sustainable development (Fernández et al., 2006). The project aimed at raising awareness on social responsibility within the Chilean educational system and promoting the concept in Chile and the region. It also intended to institutionalize social responsibility, to solicit active engagement in all areas (social, economic, political, and environmental), and to connect Latin American universities around this topic. Through this project, universities focused on identifying how they can contribute to the human development and the welfare of society, as they are expected to build the whole person, not only through knowledge and education, but also by embedding the culture of ethics, social responsibility and citizenship. Universidad Construye Pais' has set a framework for USR based on disseminating ethics and values across teaching, research, management, and extension activities to address local, regional, and global challenges, and to achieve sustainable human development. This project led to a growing network of universities within Latin America committed to the USR concept and its practices (Mora & Ibáñez, 2009), and translated into a noticeable research output on the understanding of USR, its importance and impact on stakeholders.

Researchers did not agree on a single definition to USR. According to Jimenez de la Jara (2007), it is expressed through the university's efforts to instill and apply ethical principles and values, and to participate actively in the creation of positive social change through four main practices: teaching, research, management, and extension activities. De la Cuesta et al. (2010, p.236) described USR as "*educational services and knowledge transfer following principles of ethics, good governance, respect for the environment, social commitment and promotion of citizen values under the premise of being accountable to society in regards to the commitments with their stakeholders*". USR was also referred to as "*the voluntary commitment of universities to incorporate social, labor, ethical, and societal concerns into their different main functions (teaching, research, management, and environmental factors) derived from the externalities that arise from their activities, for which they must take into account the social demands of their stakeholders*" (Larrán & Andrades, 2013, p.280). Consequently, USR can be viewed as the activities, which universities undertake beyond teaching and research to address their stakeholders' expectations (Giuffré & Ratto, 2014; Gonzalez-Perez et al., 2007; Lo et al., 2017; Walker, 2018). With the emergence of several definitions, Esfijani et al. (2013) developed a typology to determine the main themes of USR, and to suggest a consolidated, comprehensive description of it. In their

research, they analysed 18 definitions, identified 8 approaches, and classified 7 sub concepts, which ultimately led to their definition of USR: "*a concept whereby university integrates all of its functions and activities with the society needs through active engagement with its communities in an ethical and transparent manner which aimed to meet all stakeholders' expectations*" (Esfijani et al., 2013, p.280). In simple terms, USR is presented as the university version of corporate social responsibility (CSR), in which the stakeholder constitutes the main component. However, Francois Vallaeys (2007) differentiates USR from CSR due to its educational and cognitive impacts that do not apply in corporations. Moreover, his description of USR as the ethical behaviours of university stakeholders, reflected through the responsible management of the university's academic, cognitive, labour, and environmental effects, which reinforce the transition toward sustainable societies, earned a growing prominence and reliability. For Vallaeys (2007), defining USR starts with determining the effects of the university functions on its surrounding at four different levels:

- *Organizational impact*: The university affects the lives of its internal stakeholders (academic and non-academic staff and students) and influences the surrounding environment through its daily operations (waste, pollution, etc.). Hence, the importance of policies which promote the welfare of the university community, and reduce the university's negative footprints on the environment.
- *Educational impact:* The university has a key role in developing future leaders through knowledge and teaching, as well through the ethics and values it engrains in students, which define their behaviors and practices in their personal and professional lives. Thus, the content delivered to students and the richness of their university experience are vital to produce ethical and socially responsible citizens able to build a sustainable society.
- *Cognitive and epistemological impacts:* It relates to the relevance and usefulness of the created and disseminated knowledge through teaching and research. It seems essential to link education to serving the society through channeling technology and science to address emerging socio-economic and environmental issues.
- *Social impact:* The university appears as a paramount actor in the economic, social and political progress. By being aware of and responsive to society's needs, universities can influence the future of the world we live in.

While Dima et al. (2013, p.23) distinguishes between the "*implicit social role*" of universities through teaching their students ethics and values, and the "*sustainable, conceptualized social responsibility*" taught systematically through customized trainings for students.

In brief, USR features at various levels of the university's mission, vision, and practices— namely, its curriculum, research, social, and environmental actions. It is mainly based on the implementation of ethical practices in key university functions, to address social and environmental issues (Wigmore-Álvarez & Ruiz-Lozano, 2012) such as:

- Developing and delivering a curriculum with courses on ethics and social responsibility in approaching societal and environmental issues.
- Directing research to serve society by responding to emerging social and environmental challenges.
- Ensuring good governance, accountability, and transparency of management.
- Encouraging civic engagement, volunteerism, and active citizenship among universities' key stakeholders.

USR exhibits theoretical and practical richness as it complements the moral and legal obligations ruling people's actions, and it regulates their impact on the surrounding environment. Therefore, the university performance and its impact on the various internal (mostly students, staff, and faculty) and external stakeholders (civil society, private and public sectors, etc.) have a substantial effect on its role as a main social actor, and anchored institution contributing to the sustainable development of its territory.

According to Vallaeys (2014, p.91) "*social responsibility should consist of a dynamic partnership for transforming a system that is reproducing the wrong impacts in which the university is participating"*. As sustainability cannot be achieved through the modified behavior of few individuals, USR requires awareness and realization of the produced unsustainable damaging effects, and a collective co-responsibility to implement the necessary measures for proper and sustainable solutions (Vallaeys, 2014). Consistency and synergy of the university acts across all functions, while accounting for its impact on all its stakeholders are crucial for USR, as the sustainability and welfare of society and future generations rely heavily on the quality of education grasped by students, who are the future world leaders.

Literature on USR has been scarce (Ahmad, 2012) until the last decade when it started attracting a growing interest reflected by a rising number of publications on diverse USR related topics. Most of these studies underline the importance of USR to address society's needs (Brdulak & Brdulak, 2018; Gomez, 2014; Peric, 2016; Sharma & Sharma, 2019) and contribute to its sustainable

development (Alzyoud & Bani-Hani, 2015; Frandoloso & Rebelatto, 2019; Grigore et al., 2013). Researchers established several models based on their understanding of USR. Dima et al. (2013) presented a six-dimension model of academic social responsibility trying to evaluate USR using quantifiable dimensions. Goddard & Kempton (2016) discussed the civic university model in which university's social engagement should be embedded in the three missions of university in response to the global and local societal issues, toward achieving regional sustainability and competitiveness. While Peric (2016) presented a model relying on the social and educational impacts of USR to predict and address society's needs. Mora, Serra, and Vieira (2018) discussed the Latin American universities' model of social engagement incorporated into the third mission as a response to the lack of social welfare provided by the State in adverse socio-economic contexts. These models among others, agree on the accountability of university toward its stakeholders—mainly students and society (Wigmore-Álvarez et al., 2020), and the importance of developing students' social responsibility and citizenship as key elements of USR. This aim can be attained through a transformation rather than a compliance, facilitated by the value-learning process to translate strategies into actions (MuijenHeidi, 2004). USR awareness and incorporation into the university culture are essential to enhance stakeholders' understanding and buy-in for a successful engagement and transition (Ahmad, 2012; Kaul & Smith, 2012). Case studies and surveys conducted in universities across different geographical and cultural contexts provide diverse USR implementation processes [Oman (Mehta, 2011); Africa (Amoako et al., 2013); Spain (Tiana & Villarreal, 2016); Latin America (Mora et al., 2018); Taiwan (Su et al., 2018); Brazil (Frandoloso & Rebelatto, 2019); Germany (Leal Filho et al., 2019a); South East Asia (Symaco & Tee, 2019)]. These encompass injecting relevant content into teaching and educational programmes, conducting research with social value and relevance, in addition to various targeted student projects and activities to ensure sustainable human development.

3.5.2 USR Measurement

Although USR research has been attracting a greater attention, there is still limited research assessing the social impact of programs and activities practiced and promoted by universities. Relevant literature indicates that USR is commonly evaluated through international standards for sustainability reporting. Sustainability measures like GRI (Global Reporting Initiative), STARS (Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment, Rating System), ARISE (Assessing Responsibility In Sustainable Education), AISHE (Auditing Instrument for Sustainability in Higher Education), and PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) among others are being adopted to evaluate and report the university's commitment to sustainable and socially responsible practices,

which facilitate comparability among institutions (Wigmore-Alvarez & Ruiz-Lozano, 2012; Wigmore-Alvarez et al., 2020). Dagilienė and Mykolaitienė (2015) also highlighted the reliance on sustainability reporting with the absence of standardization among universities. Recent researchers' efforts led to the development of the Value-Process-Impact (VPI)—a performance valuation framework that assesses USR contribution to the economic, environmental, and social sustainability— by Lo et al. (2017). While Liu et al. (2017) established a scale to measure Chinese students' social responsibility, and Latif (2018) developed another scale to assess students' perceptions of USR.

3.5.3 Impact of USR on University Related Outcomes

Establishing dimensions and measures to evaluate and report USR is essential for the communication and promotion of universities' commitment and achievements in social responsibility, bettering their image and reputation. Research in this field indicates that the commitment to USR and the implementation of well devised communication strategies would enhance university reputation (Lo et al., 2017; Ogunmokun & Timur, 2019; Vázquez et al., 2016), brand image (Plungpongpan et al., 2016) and corporate identity (Atakan & Eker, 2007). It all feeds the university's competitive advantage (Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2020; Shek, 2019**)**.

3.5.4 Impact of USR on Stakeholder Related Outcomes

Research on higher education reveals that the implementation of USR at the heart of university, in the culture and strategies enhances stakeholders' understanding and awareness of this concept, and achieves a greater involvement and commitment to social responsibility (Ali & Ali, 2016; Chen et al., 2015; Cho, 2017; Kaul & Smith, 2012). USR becomes a key takeaway for graduating students who acquire their social responsibility and citizenship through teaching and practice on campus, to adopt it in their personal and professional lives (Ramos et al., 2018), leading to the sustainable development of society (Shek, 2019).

Furthermore, embedding USR into teaching, research, management, and activities proved to have a positive impact on university stakeholders—namely on students who are the key stakeholders, by enhancing their awareness, understanding, and perception of USR (Al-Hosaini & Sofian, 2015; Burcea & Marinescu, 2011; Ogunmokun & Timur, 2019; Ramos et al., 2018; Shaari et al., 2018). This increases students' satisfaction (Brdulak & Brdulak, 2018; Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2020; Hsieh et al., 2019; Ismail & Shujaat, 2019; McCowan, 2016; Sánchez-Hernández & Mainardes, 2016; Tetřevová & Sabalova, 2010; Vasilescu et al., 2010; Vázquez et al., 2015, 2016),

identification with the university, and loyalty (Atakan & Eker; 2007; El-Kassar et al., 2019; Makki, 2018; Ogunmokun & Timur, 2019). It also leads to a greater employee commitment (Lo et al., 2017).

Although some debatable studies argued that socio-demographic factors do not affect students' perception of USR (Teixeira et al., 2018), these conclusions were refuted by research corroborating that students' perceptions of USR are influenced by elements like gender and culture (da Silva Junior et al., 2019; El-Kassar et al., 2019; González-Rodríguez et al., 2013). These studies affirm the necessity of accounting for the contextual and cultural environment, and deploying culturally sensitive socially responsible programs and initiatives to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

3.5.5 USR, Awareness, and Communication

Despite the growing interest in USR, research pinpointed a lack of understanding and awareness of this concept and its practices, which affect stakeholders' engagement and participation in USR implementation (Ahmad, 2012; Leal Filho et al., 2019a; Pabian, 2019). Hence the importance of a proper and consistent communication of the university's social responsibility in teaching, research, and practices through various direct and indirect channels, to increase stakeholders' awareness and commitment, enabling a smooth USR incorporation (Ahmad, 2012; Cho, 2017; Gomes et al., 2019; Wigmore-Alvarez et al., 2020). In addition, the visibility of social responsibility can touch potential 'customers' before they proceed with their choice of university, as studies reveal that students are increasingly attracted by scholarships and grants, as well by social responsibility related courses/trainings/conferences/etc. (Plungpongpan et al., 2016; Wigmore-Alvarez et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential for universities, not only to be socially responsible toward their stakeholders who constitute key funding resources, but also to promote USR through strategic marketing and communication efforts, to raise awareness and motivate the community to engage in USR for better outcomes and greater competitiveness.

3.5.6 The Stakeholder Theory

The growing accountability of universities is compelling greater social responsibility toward their stakeholders, especially that they represent a main source of revenues with the constrained public funding (Cremonini & Adamu, 2020). This social responsibility concept has been always linked to Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1983), which is used extensively in the CSR literature, and will be drawn upon to set the theoretical framework for this research.

This organizational management theory, emphasizes the need for companies to consider their impact on all stakeholders affected by their activities, and to contribute to enhancing their host environment. It is also known to be an ethical theory, which blends together the concepts of business and ethics as Freeman (1994, p.419) describes it, "*We cannot divorce the idea of a moral community or of a moral discourse from the ideas of the value-creation activity of business"*. According to the Stakeholder Theory, meeting stakeholders' needs and expectations generates positive outcomes for businesses (Freeman, 2010). Research in this field grounded in the Stakeholder Theory, linked CSR to a multitude of desirable results related to various stakeholders, namely customers and employees' satisfaction, loyalty, identification, and commitment, among others. It also established a relationship among CSR and organizational outcomes, such as financial performance, image, corporate identity, and quality of service, to name a few. Accordingly, companies that practice CSR to solve societal challenges attain a better performance and reputation (Zhu et al., 2014).

Moreover, Freeman et al. (2010) focus on presenting CSR as a strategic element of the business value proposition, rather than an additional activity conducted out of moral obligation to give back to society in return for large profits made, or to counter the negative effects resulting from the business operations. This is important because CSR was practiced sometimes to polish the organization's public image, rather than for the value it brings to concerned stakeholders and society. Freeman et al. (2010) also claim the possibility of finding balance among the diverse groups' interests, and creating value for all involved stakeholders without trade-offs, when CSR initiatives are designed based on the identified stakeholders' needs. Yet, most of the research based on Stakeholder Theory and conducted in various business disciplines, emphasize mainly on the instrumental value of this theory while overlooking the normative aspect at the core of it (Bowie, 2012).

In the higher education industry, social responsibility is being increasingly regarded as an obligation for universities (Plungpongpan et al., 2016), in their interaction with diverse constituents of society (faculty, staff, parents, suppliers, private and public organizations, etc.) beyond providing students with educational services. According to the Stakeholder Theory, accounting for those stakeholders' demands and creating value for them will yield positive results for universities, similar to what CSR brings to businesses. Several studies grounded in the Stakeholder Theory, established a relationship among USR and desirable student/employee related outcomes, as well as organizational outcomes, which corroborates the value of USR.

A successful integration of USR into teaching, research, management, and activities, one that creates synergy across these functions, is based on a clear understanding of stakeholders' needs and expectations, reflected into the university strategies and practices. Stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the USR concept is essential for a greater participation and commitment. According to Stakeholder Theory, by meeting stakeholders' needs and expectations, outcomes such as an enhanced perception, image, and reputation, as well as increased stakeholders' satisfaction, identification, and loyalty will follow, especially when aided by targeted marketing and communication strategies. Transforming into a socially responsible university would contribute, not only to the sustainable development of society, but also to the sustainability and competitiveness of the institution in a highly challenging market.

3.6 Social Engagement as a Response to Universities' Current Challenges

The history of university, its evolution and transformation from an institution to educate the reigning elite in the medieval era into the 'public's university' from the 19th century onward, indicate unarguably the university's move away from its ivory tower to become a vital element of the societal fabric. This place implies the university's sensitivity toward its socio-economic context as it interacts with the hosting environment through its various functions and operations. With the increased focus on the territory, reinforced through the changing higher education policies and through funds tied to regional development, universities have been compelled to revisit their missions, values, and practices in a renewed contract with society. This interrelationship and proximity to the public has given rise to a series of concepts revolving around universities' engagement with their surroundings.

An overview of the literature on universities' social engagement reveals diverse notions in which these institutions are perceived as regional assets serving their communities, and developing closer connections with society. These include the land-grant university and the civic university (19th century), the scholarship of engagement, the Triple and Quadruple Helix, the regional innovation systems, knowledge Mode 2, and the entrepreneurial university (20th century), as well as the anchor institutions, USR, and the stewardship of place (21st century).

A summary table (Table 4) developed based on a review of the literature on the presented notions shows that most of them originated from the U.S. and UK, while USR appeared in Chile. All of these concepts revolve around universities' interaction with the various constituents of society through one or more of their three mandates: teaching, research, and the third mission on

university's socio-economic and cultural contribution to local communities. Most of these concepts appear to overlap in some areas and diverge in others. Despite the different names and some variations in their description, practices, breadth of coverage and focus areas, these notions concur on the role of university in achieving society's wellbeing, and driving innovation and economic development through social engagement. They all agree on common aims for creating relevant knowledge, and contributing to local and regional development. These concepts present university as a change maker with a key role in advancing society, while ensuring its own viability and sustainability.

Table 4 highlights some similarities in the description and basic understanding of many concepts. The American land-grant university, which is among the oldest forms of university response to the community's needs through teaching and research, has been described as a representation of the civic university (Goddard et al., 2016). This is due to the richness and rootedness of its civic culture and traditions, as well as its place-based focus. Similarly, the stewardship of place seems inspired by the land-grant universities through advocating for an engagement that is defined by the local community needs (AASCU, 2002). Yet, this concept which focuses on an integrated, bi-directional and mutually beneficial relationship with society, is further advanced by providing the leaders of the member-universities with a 'toolkit' or detailed guidelines to direct their footsteps on how to promote university's public engagement effectively. In the same way, USR relates to these engaged universities in their efforts to meet stakeholders' demands through accountability, and the implementation of ethical and responsible practices in all university functions, which brings it closer to the civic university in which engagement is embedded into teaching and research to address the community's needs. In addition, the scholarship of engagement, which expands faculty functions and sets the principles of their professional role, aiming to achieve an effective interaction and a better service to society. As for universities identified as anchor institutions, their scale, local networks and embeddedness in place grant them value as influential agents of change and advancement within their urban or rural settings. Accordingly, some land-grant universities and civic universities can be also described as anchor institutions. For these concepts, the university appears as a key player in its interaction with society, and its collaboration with local partners in the public and private sectors, except for the scholarship of engagement in which faculty are the key players in the relationship with society.

Another group encompassing regional innovation systems, Triple and Quadruple Helix, new knowledge production Mode 2, and entrepreneurial universities, gather around knowledge

production and innovation through research conducted in partnership with industries, government, research labs, and civil society among others. However, while the entrepreneurial university is central to innovation in Triple and Quadruple Helix models of university-industry-government-public environment, which collaborate at a macro-level, in the concept regional innovation systems, firms are the incubators of innovation, without dependence on any partnership with universities. As for the new knowledge production Mode 2, researchers are the agents of change in the established partnerships with various constituents of society.

Being mainly challenged by globalization, massification, constrained funds, competition, and lack of appropriate assessment tools, each of these concepts, which represent various forms of university engagement across centuries, appears as an adapted response of universities to the 'glocal' (Marginson, 2000) challenges disrupting their continuity and progress. No matter their focus or the key players in their interactions and partnerships, these universities are driving the socio-economic development of their surroundings. The presented literature throughout the various sections of this chapter affirms that social engagement constitutes an inherent part of universities' purpose, roles and missions leading to the advancement of society and the sustainable human development. This is how most universities exhibit 'intuitive strands' of social responsibility, which draws connected lines between university's social engagement and USR, and bridges the gap between both literatures, previously presented as distinct ones.

Table 4. Universities' social engagement concepts.

	Spatio-temporal origins and originators	Description	Main focus	Key players/Main collaborators	Some challenges (as per the literature)	Perceived Impact/outcomes
Land-grant universities	U.S., 1862 - Morrill Act by President Abraham Lincoln and Justin Smith Morrill	US public colleges and universities established through federal funding to meet local communities' needs	Teaching practical and relevant content	The US public university in its collaboration with society	Funding and technological constraints, commodification, accounting for regional/global contributions, competition	Stronger tie with society and fast economic growth in the U.S.
Civic University	UK and U.S., 19th century	Universities' engagement embedded into teaching and research to address societal needs while sustaining education quality	The place-based relevance in teaching, research, and engagement with global reputation & competitiveness	The university in its interaction with local partners in public and private sectors (other universities, businesses, authorities)	Dependence on local partners' capacity to achieve success	Contribution to local/regional socio-economic growth through addressing local societal issues
Scholarship of Engagement	U.S., 1990s by Ernest Boyer	Faculty functions expanded and scholarship redefined into discovery, integration, application, and teaching	Faculty's role in their interaction with society through their functions	Faculty	Identity crisis, detachment from society, unbalanced faculty reward system	Faculty empowerment/ motivation to engage in quality teaching, research, and outreach activities
Regional Innovation Systems	European context, 1992, by Philip Cooke	Clusters built on partnerships among diverse sectors notably businesses and research institutions	The regional aspect of the forming clusters	Industries are incubators of innovation	Conflicting or overlapping national and regional agendas, institutional goals and resources, and specificity of the region	Achieve regional innovation and entrepreneurship
The Triple Helix & Quadruple Helix	U.S. and UK, mid-1990s by Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff extended to Quadruple Helix by Carayannis and Campbell in 2009	Partnerships among university-industry-government, which then included the civil society in the Quadruple Helix model	Technology transfer by tying teaching to research	The entrepreneurial university is the incubator of innovation in the university-industry-government partnership	Tensions and conflicts among collaborators, lack of leadership support, and financial constraints	Regional advancement and innovation through the university third mission, while generating income
New Knowledge Production (Mode 2)	No specific spatial origin, 1994	Innovative transdisciplinary context-driven, and socially accountable research conducted to solve pressing issues	The social relevance and practicality of the conducted research	Researchers are agents of change through partnering with government, public organizations, research labs, think-tanks, etc.	Globalization, massification	Drive socio-economic development through relevance and social accountability in knowledge production
Entrepreneurial University	US, 1983 Introduced by Henry Etzkowitz, 1998 defined by Robert Burton Clark	Exploiting teaching and research to enhance reputation, solicit external funds, and engage scholars in outreach activities	Increasing the research stream	The university in its collaboration with industries	Procedural challenges and academic resistance for change, weakening of social values, and risk of failure implied with entrepreneurship.	Financial independence (from government) , drive innovation and economic development, through integrating entrepreneurialism into teaching and research
Anchor Institutions	U.S., 2001 by Fulbright-Anderson, Auspos & Anderson	Large organizations with a potential to impact urban and rural host communities through their scale, embeddedness in place, local networks	Fulfilling a public service mission to support and revitalize deprived surroundings	Universities, hospitals and large organizations	Lack of tools to assess long-term impact, community skepticism, risk of mission discontinuity with the change of leadership	Change and advancement in urban and rural settings (cities, towns and villages), mostly in 'left-behind' places
University Social Responsibility	Chile, 2001 by Universidad Construe Pais	Ethical practices and accountability in teaching, research, management and extension activities	Meeting stakeholders' needs and expectations	Universities in their accountability and relationship with stakeholders	Assessment and communication tools to assess social impact	Social transformation toward sustainable human development
Stewardship of Place	U.S., 2002 by American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)	Institutionalizing public engagement to align efforts with goals	Student engagement, entrepreneurial activities, and regional/international partnerships	University leaders in designing public engagement promotion strategies	Funding constraints, support & time of faculty experienced in entrepreneurship, and identifying the right partnerships with respect to cultural differences and legal compliances.	Achieving regional and workforce development

Through this review of the 'old' and 'new' literature on university's engagement, it becomes apparent that, at any point in time, placing 'social engagement' or 'social responsibility' at the heart of the university mandates, contributes to the wellbeing and sustainable development of society, while ensuring university's viability and progress, achieved through the rewarding benefits of practicing social responsibility. 'Civically engaged' or 'socially responsible' universities would enjoy an enhanced reputation and trust, hence a greater support and stronger ties with local and regional communities. Social engagement seems no more a pressing need only, but also a great opportunity for university to sustain itself while making a difference and benefiting society or simply an opportunity for 'doing well by doing good'.

That being said, although the civic university model seems the most comprehensive and authentic among all, USR will constitute the framework for this study conducted in the Lebanese context, which suffers the absence of an effective governmental role in higher education. In a small developing country like Lebanon, with a higher education system relying significantly on small young private universities, which exhibit business-like practices in their competition, these institutions would be more receptive to understanding USR and adopting it as a 'CSR version' for the higher education industry.

3.7 A typology of USR

The institutionalization of USR, be it in public or private universities at developed countries, has been explicitly expressed through different structures ranging from creating relevant programs/initiatives to the founding of a so-called social responsibility and sustainability office/department, with small to large teams (2 to 30^{+} staff), fully invested in expanding the university's social engagement and maximizing its impact on all stakeholders. In many institutions, this has been coupled with the creation of a webpage or website with focused content highlighting USR across the university mission/goals/strategic plan and its translation through events, programs, partnerships, courses, and research among others. In addition to newsletters and diverse social media accounts notably on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube for a wider reach out. While the extensive literature reveals a variety of concepts, good practices, and means of universities' social engagement with their surroundings, table 5 below presents diversified examples of USR institutionalization at universities in developed countries, showcasing various models of USR implementation:

Table 5. Models of USR institutionalization at universities in developed countries.

University	Type	Country	Initiative/Program/ Dept.	Establishment Date	Description	Team	Communication Channels	Social Media for the office/ program
University of Pennsylvania	Private	USA	Netter Center for Community Partnerships	1992	Community development partnerships and community service through teaching and research	N/A	Website + Newsletter + Social Media	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
University of Brighton	Public	England	Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP)	2003	Collaborative partnership with the community to ensure its sustainable development	N/A	Website + Mailing list	
University of Edinburgh	Public	Scotland	Department for Social Responsibility & Sustainability	2012	Contribute to making the world a better place through SR and sustainability related programs and projects	32 staff	Website + Monthly Newsletter	Twitter, Instagram , Facebook YouTube, LinkedIn
University of Manchester	Public	England	Social Responsibility	N/A	Programs, projects, and plans aimed at leading the social impact in HE by advancing the community's social and environmental wellness.	7 staff	Website + Monthly Newsletter	Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr
The University of Queensland	Public	Australia	UQ Global Change Institute	N/A	Collaborative Research initiatives to solve global challenges.	N/A	Website	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn
Kyoto University	Public	Japan	Global University Social Responsibility	N/A	Initiatives targeted at developing socially responsible citizens addressing global issues with sustainable solutions.	N/A	Webpage	None

The University of Pennsylvania, a private institution in the US, established the Netter Center for Community Partnerships in 1992 as an expression of its commitment to contribute to the betterment of its host environment. Its approach included initiatives such as the '*academically based community service (ABCS)*' geared to collaboratively solve real world issues through teaching, research, and service; the '*University-Assisted Community Schools (UACS)*' to empower public students and other community members; as well as the '*Anchor Institution Approach*' in building local development partnerships, among other initiatives. The center has a website, which presents its mission, objectives, approach, action plan, news, and other relevant information, in addition to a newsletter and social media accounts to share USR related updates with the community.

The University of Edinburgh in Scotland, in its attempt to '*make the world a better place'*, established its Social Responsibility and Sustainability Department in 2012, which is known for its large team (one of the largest among USR centers) currently including 32 staff among which 3 members for communications. The department has a rich USR website that presents its goals, programs and projects, topics tackled, news and events, reporting, and a call for action with a guide on how to engage fin USR or staff and students, in addition to links to their social media accounts.

Similarly, for the University of Manchester in England, USR is a strategic goal explicitly embedded in the institution's vision and strategic plan. Its Social Responsibility and Sustainability department composed of 7 staff members, has a social responsibility and civic engagement plan with a five-year road map on how this will be achieved. In addition to social media accounts, it has one of the

most comprehensive websites that displays USR across all university functions, and an attractive 'Impact' page expressing the effect of USR in numbers, some of which related to rankings (1st in the world for impact against the UN SDGs, 2021), and the SR awards.

The University of Brighton, a public institution in England, founded its Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP) in 2003, aimed at responding to social issues and developing sustainable communities through joint efforts, knowledge, and experience. This program offers a rich diversified content on its website, which includes the compelling story of its launching, partnerships and programs, resources, news, and short films sharing inspiring stories on some university-community partnerships.

Kyoto University in Japan also implemented the Global University Social Responsibility, in an attempt to build socially responsible global citizens able to tackle global issues with sustainable solutions, as per the mission, socially responsible initiatives, partnerships, and experiences presented on their webpage, with no social media accounts.

While the University of Queensland in Australia has created the UQ Global Challenge Institute to serve the local, national, and global communities by responding to socio-economic and environmental global issues related to health, environment, science, technology, inclusion, etc. The institute has a website and social media accounts to promote its USR related initiatives.

These examples show a variety of approaches in implementing and conducting USR by developing targeted programs and initiatives or going all the way to founding dedicated departments and institutes. The marketing and communication efforts also varied from a basic webpage to a combination of professional websites, newsletters, and social media accounts. However, they all share a common goal at the core of their missions, contributing to their communities beyond teaching and research. It is worth noting that the most invested universities in promoting social responsibility and sustainability to contribute to the advancement of society had USR at the core of their mission and as a pillar of their strategic plan. This is when USR gets allocated appropriate resources and communication efforts, such as the University of Edinburgh and the University of Manchester. These institutions have founded dedicated units, equipped with qualified staff and adequate resources, well-designed websites, newsletters, and active social media presence to promote their efforts and increase community engagement.

The different models and levels of USR implementation showcased by the selected examples served to develop a typology of USR for a maximized impact (table 6). It starts with injecting USR into the university mission, strategic planning, teaching, research, extracurriculars, and management, in addition to the establishment of USR office with a dedicated website and social media accounts as per the 'full USR implementation model' in table 6. Moreover, the table denotes the needed interventions to transition from USR practiced intuitively in many universities such as LAU, to a full USR implementation at universities such as Edinburgh and Manchester in the UK, and University of Pennsylvania in the US:

Table 6. Typology of USR implementation.

USR in	Basic Intuitive USR model	Full USR implementation model
University Mission	x	✓
Strategic Plan	x	✓
Curriculum	✓	✓
Research	✓	✓
Extension Activities	✓	✓
Management	x	✓
USR Department Initiation	x	✓
Dedicated Website	x	✓
Dedicated Social Media Accounts	x	✓

The typology of USR implementation would have it reflected in the university mission and embedded in the main goals of the university's strategic planning, which facilitates injecting it across all university functions.

Building on the perceived value of social engagement in general, and USR in particular, depicted through this chapter, this study aims to find a rationale for private universities to kick-start a strategic implementation of USR across their functions, which would help them meet their stakeholders' expectations, overcome emerging challenges, and reap rewarding outcomes. For that purpose, this research grounded in Stakeholder Theory will examine the relationship between USR and funding, which is a global challenge particularly for private universities. Establishing a positive effect of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement would drive USR institutionalization at Lebanese private universities.

The next chapter discusses the philosophical stance and explores the methodology adopted to conduct this qualitative study. It provides a detailed description of the research methods and design, encompassing semi-structured interviews, sampling and data collection, data management, and analysis to generate the study findings. Ethical considerations and limitations will be also presented.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

An extensive review of the literature on university's social engagement in its diverse versions reveals, not only its interrelatedness with the social responsibility—which is increasingly expected from universities (Ali & Ali, 2016)—but also the existence of numerous, yet sporadic socially responsible initiatives and programs within most universities. Building upon these and expanding them strategically by optimizing the use of available resources, represents a unique opportunity for universities to yield desirable institutional and stakeholders' related outcomes, as per Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (1983). In fact, private universities, which rely largely on tuition fees, donations, and grants, hence on private sources of funds, are expected to give back and exhibit social responsibility, particularly toward students and society, which represent their main source of income (Plungpongpan et al., 2016). According to Stakeholder Theory (1983), implementing social responsibility would generate positive outcomes to universities including enhanced financial performance. With the public funding becoming more restricted and conditional, universities are increasingly looking for alternative sources of funding. In that context, this study aims to establish a strong rationale for private universities to institutionalize USR, by examining the relationship among USR, enrolment, and funding enhancement. An affirmed positive impact of USR on funding enhancement, would drive a greater engagement in USR implementation, since this will help universities overcome their long-standing challenge of funding.

This chapter provides an overview about the research methodology, starting with the philosophical stance behind the choice of methods and the research design of this study. The subsequent section introduces the research methods and the adopted qualitative approach. This is followed by the research design section, with sub-sections describing the data collection techniques encompassing semi-structured interviews, interview guide development, and sampling. Also, it covers the process of organizing the collected information in preparation for the analysis and generation of findings, which is portrayed elaborately. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations and methodology-related limitations.

4.2 Philosophical Approach: Critical Realism

The philosophical worldviews—be it explicitly exposed or hidden—direct the research design and the methods applied in any research work. Yet, these paradigms are implied in most research and necessitate identification (Slife & Williams, 1995). In accordance with this, critical realism will be

the philosophical stance guiding the study design and the choice of methods adopted in this research.

In fact, establishing a causal relationship among USR, enrolment, and funding enhancement would seem technically feasible and straightforward using a positivist approach with quantitative data collection and analysis; and a large sample size would allow generalization (Cohen et al., 2017). However, this objectivism might entice questioning the plausibility and soundness of the findings on such a complex topic in social sciences due to the "*mechanistic and reductionist view of nature which, by definition, regards life in measurable terms rather than inner experience*" when utilizing a positivist approach (Cohen et al., 2017, p.14). As the literature uncovers complex relationships between universities and the diverse constituents of society in different contexts, adopting positivism and presenting the findings as established or absolute facts risk appearing superficial and simplistic. With such multifaceted and intricate reality, events require 'thick descriptions' (Cohen et al., 2017) retrieved through participants' experiences, rather than the reductionist interpretations of the researcher. According to Cohen et al. (2017, p.17), the "*understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside"*. Therefore, a critical realist retroductive approach seems more appropriate to examine the topic of the study, since it grants a deeper understanding of the reality based on individuals' experiences, to enrich the developed theoretical perspective.

Critical realism appeared through the work of the British philosopher Roy Bhashkar (1944-2014) in the 1970s - 1980s, and was further expanded by Sayer (1992), Archer (1995) and many other critical realists. This comprehensive philosophy of science (Brown et al., 2002) rose out of the 1980s' 'paradigm wars' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), as it combines elements of both the positivist and constructivist approaches. It is seen as an "*integration of a realist ontology (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories, and constructions) with a constructivist epistemology (our understanding of this world is inevitably a construction built from our own perspectives and standpoint)*" (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p.93). Critical realism's ontology distinguishes between the empirical (human experience), the actual (events and actions occurring independently of our understanding) and the real (causal powers which may only be inferred) (Fletcher, 2017). It argues that there exists an observable and measurable independent reality, but our knowledge of it is always limited, or as expressed by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.111), can be "*understood only imperfectly and probabilistically*". Since there is no direct access to the existing objective reality, there is a need to examine and comprehend the deeper constitutions and

relationships that "*lie beneath the surface of social reality"* (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p.106) to approach reality as closely as possible.

For critical realists *"the ultimate goal of research is not to identify generalizable laws (positivism) or to identify the lived experience or beliefs of social actors (interpretivism); it is to develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding*" (McEvoy & Richards, 2006, p.69). Therefore, instead of a definitive 'truth', in-depth explanations of the reality are expected (Cruickshank, 2003). The process of understanding the denoted institutional events and their causal mechanisms can be achieved through two steps, starting with realizing the feelings and actions experienced, then the cognitive processing or 'backward reasoning' that follows the lived experience to explore the reality behind it (Reed, 2005). In simple words, *"we need to look at the big picture of which we see only a small part"* (Saunders et al., 2015, p.140).

There is no specific method for critical realism, the choice of methodology should *"depend on the nature of the object of study and what one wants to learn about it"* (Sayer, 2000, p.19). Hence the decision to conduct a qualitative study with a retroductive approach, aiming to fulfil the need for a thorough understanding of the stratified reality and the multilayered relationships in the subject study.

4.3 Methods: Qualitative Retroductive Approach

The choice of the research approach depends on, not only the philosophical stance, design, and methods, but also the research problem to be examined (Creswell, 2014). Although USR is a relatively new notion in the realm of universities' engagement, it is gaining a growing interest by researchers who have been undertaking either a positivist or a constructivist approach. Some researchers deployed quantitative methods using surveys (Al-Hosaini & Sofian, 2015; Ali & Ali, 2016; El-Kassar et al., 2019; Gomes et al., 2019; Grigore et al., 2013; Ismail & Shujaat, 2019; Liu et al., 2017; Pabian, 2019; Santos et al., 2020; Symaco & Tee, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2018; Vazquez et al., 2015, while qualitative methods were more widely utilized. In this regard, many researchers applied case studies (Alzyoud & Bani-Hani, 2015; Frandoloso & Rebelatto, 2019; Goddard & Kempton, 2016; Mora et al., 2018; Peric, 2016; Shaari et al., 2018; Tiana & Villareal, 2016; Vasilescu et al., 2010; Wigmore-Alvarez & Ruiz-Lozano, 2012). Others chose interviews (Atakan & Eker, 2007; Cremonini & Adamu, 2020; Hsieh et al., 2019; Kaul & Smith, 2012; Plungpongpan et al., 2016), focus groups (Ayala-Rodriguez et al., 2019), and content analysis (Dagilienė & Mykolaitienė, 2015; Ismail, 2019).

The complexity of the current topic and its value depicted through the research undertaken so far, calls for a qualitative retroductive analysis, which provides an in-depth understanding of the multilayered relationships between university and its different constituents, and the manifold interactions stemming from the university engagement with its surrounding. Universities operate in a constantly changing world. Although they exist objectively, their survival and continuity are dependent on complex relationships with their stakeholders, in an environment loaded with influential factors and interferences. Since the study aims to establish a rationale for universities to engage in institutionalizing USR−the latter being increasingly needed to address the soaring socio-economic challenges−it is assuming a causal relationship among USR, enrolment, and funding enhancement based on the Stakeholder Theory.

In the Lebanese context, private universities rely substantially on students and donors to secure their funds, at a critical time marked with an abysmal socio-economic crisis, which heightens their challenges as well as their expected contributions. A qualitative approach will provide university stakeholders with the flexibility to share their experiences, perspectives, and what is important for them (Azungah, 2018). It will also allow the researcher to probe for a deeper understanding of the multilayered relationships between the Lebanese private universities and their stakeholders. In particular the perspectives of students, alumni, academic and non-academic staff perspectives about the value and impact of USR, through their lenses, will offer richer insights and explanations. Hence the relevance of adopting a qualitative approach.

Moreover, retroduction that *"involves imagining a mechanism, which, if it were real, would account for the phenomena in question"* (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018, p.12), seems practical to identify patterns in different stakeholders' relationships with the university within various contexts. Particularly, retroduction attempts to determine what the larger context has to be like for the observed phenomena to be what it is rather than something else (Sayer, 2010). It facilitates revealing any underlying causality, as it might as well provide new or unforeseen perspectives by uncovering what was previously overlooked or unnoticed (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018). In the context of this study, it might appear that different groups of stakeholders have differing perceptions about the university, and that stakeholders are more inclined to financially support a socially responsible university, regardless of it being a private or public institution. Subsequently, this implies the presence of many factors coming into play, offering an opportunity to better understand the impact of USR on funding resources in the context of private universities in a developing country like Lebanon, at a critically challenging time of socio-economic crises.

4.4 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design for data collection and analysis, using semi-structured interviews as data collection technique, then NVivo software to organize and manage the generated data, which is analyzed following a thematic analysis.

USR is a relatively contemporary topic that is gaining increased attention by researchers. However, despite the growing number of USR related publications over the past few years, there is lack of studies examining the impact of USR on university enrolment and funding, particularly in private universities, which rely substantially on tuition fees and private funding resources in the absence of any public support. Therefore, adopting a qualitative approach to explore this area seems more relevant, with the limited literature on this topic and the studied population. It will allow unraveling the complex relationships between university and its stakeholders through a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences with USR, which is essential to establish theoretical contributions (Bansal & Corley, 2011).

4.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Exploratory semi-structured interview is a widely used method of data collection in qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The versatility and flexibility of this method starting with a sequence of open-ended and hypothetically-driven questions shaping the direction of the interview, permits to engage participants and draw on their experiences in the particular research topic (Galletta, 2013). These questions provide a defined structure that guides the conversation without limiting it, thus allowing interviewer's improvisation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and reciprocity (Galetta, 2013). The questions linked to the purpose of the study facilitate a deep exploration of the university stakeholders' understanding for USR and its value, as well as their awareness of its common practices within the institution, and its importance for the viability and prosperity of the institution. This ensures the breadth of coverage for a deeper understanding, and facilitates the detection of commonalities and differences among the various internal stakeholders.

It is worth noting that the qualitative approach for generating data through interviews is challenged by "*instrumentation rigor and bias management*" (Chenail, 2011, p.256). The researcher becomes the 'instrument' for data collection and generation, through questions they develop themselves, and employ in their interaction with interviewees to facilitate the flow of rich data as they share personal experiences. According to Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003, p.320) *"the researcher as instrument can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness in qualitative research"*. The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) plays a vital role in this regard when they

disapprove any open-ended interviewing protocol (Lincoln, 2005) that reveals the instrument's lack of rigor, which minimizes the risk related to instrumentation integrity.

Moreover, being an affiliated member of the institution where the research is conducted, with a degree of proximity to the participants in a qualitative study, entails a risk of researcher bias (Mehra, 2002), which is also linked to other factors, such as insufficient preparedness for field work (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). To that effect, adopting the 'interviewing the investigator' technique introduced by Chenail (2011) allows testing and evaluating the developed questions in terms of their coherence and relevance to serve the purpose of the study, and generate useful data, without compromising ethical considerations. This technique following which the investigator becomes the interviewee, offers the researcher an opportunity for a thorough consideration of the whole interviewing process (context, questions, ethical considerations, etc.) from a different perspective, before engaging in interviews with the participants. Moreover, for this research project undertaken during challenging times marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, recurrent lockdowns, and economic turmoil in Lebanon, which deeply affected the number of interviews, 'interviewing the investigator' technique seems more useful compared to undertaking a pilot study, which requires an IRB approval, is more time consuming, and eliminates valuable interviewees from the limited list of participants (Chenail, 2011). In fact, twelve individuals politely declined the invitation to take part in the interviews, not to mention the non-responders, and the delays in scheduling interviews. The meeting with one of the executive officers was reported four times, to finally take place two months after its initial date. The time constraints and lack of responsiveness, which limited the number of participants, weren't in favor of a pilot study as it will exclude important interviewees. Moreover, the adopted technique will minimize the researcher bias stemming from their affiliation to the studied institution, and will enhance the readiness to deal with unforeseen problems that might emerge throughout the interviewing process.

4.4.2 Interview Guide Development

The semi-structured interviews represent an essential phase for gathering data to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' awareness and perception of USR, as well as its value to all involved stakeholders. Since the rigor of the data collection process determines the quality and credibility of the study (Kitto et al., 2008), a five-step framework for developing the semi-structured interview guide has been adopted (Kallio et al., 2016). After validating the use of semi-structured interviews and acquiring an adequate knowledge of the research subject, the third stage entails setting questions inspired from the literature to develop an interview guide encompassing the key themes

of the study (Taylor, 2005). These questions, which aim at engaging participants and extracting their narratives related to the purpose of the study, have been displayed in a sequence reflecting the progress toward a thorough examination of the topic. A fourth stage consists of pilot-testing or scrutinizing the preliminary guide to ensure the coverage and relevance of the questions, before finalizing the interview guide. Furthermore, the theoretical relevance, connection to the research questions, the reason for asking a specific question, the way it is formulated, and its position within the sequence of questions, are all factors considered and evaluated when developing the interview guide (Ulrich, 1999 as cited by Flick, 2009).

To launch and direct the discussion with participants from diverse groups of university stakeholders, different versions of the interview guide were deployed, with questions revolving around the following main themes:

- Participants' understanding for the role of universities and the concept of social responsibility in higher education;
- Their awareness of the socially responsible programs/practices/initiatives undertaken by the university and their value;
- Their view on the relationship between USR and funding resources; and
- Their view on the value of USR and its impact on the progress of the institution.

Common questions were used for comparability, while customized ones served to reflect specificity and depth according to the participant's stance.

Abiding by this structured process in developing the interview guide ensures the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), confirmability, and dependability of the study (Kallio et al., 2016).

4.4.3 Sampling and Data Collection

Although the qualitative study trades the representativeness of the sample for the richness of information (Kuzel, 1999), it does not prevent the diversification in the sampling with the purposeful selection of individuals 'representative' for each group, not only to ensure the abundance of data collected, but also to allow 'valid' inferences and possibly, policy-related recommendations (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

As per Silverman (2005, p.294) "*sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal, it is, or should be, theoretically grounded*". This study adopted a purposive sampling or

"one that provides a clear criterion or rationale for the selection of participants" (Ezzy, 2002, p.74), based on participants' knowledge and relevance to the research topic, their ability to reflect and eloquently express their opinions, in addition to their willingness to take part in the study. This sampling method helps maximizing the scope of data collected and, when coupled with a 'thick description' of the context, it enhances the rigor and transferability/generalizability of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The identified individuals fit into the "*primary selection*" group and are considered *"good informants*" (Flick, 2009, p.123). Accordingly, participants from the Lebanese American University representing each of the following categories: students, alumni, executive officers, faculty, and staff have been invited for the interviews. It is worth noting that the choice of this particular private university to collect the qualitative data, is based on accessibility being a staff member of the institution, and on its relevance to the subject study, being a university with a rich base of socially responsible initiatives and programs.

For the interviews, preference was given to academic and non-academic staff who work in a capacity involved directly or indirectly in socially responsible programs and activities. As for students (18^{+}) who were either referred by acquaintances or selected randomly on campus, they represented three groups:

- *First year students*: to examine their understanding of USR, perception of the university reputation and factors affecting their choice of university among others.
- *Senior/graduating students*: to understand their perception and awareness of the USR efforts exhibited by the university, their interest and their level of engagement.
- *Alumni*: to explore their insights and engagement in USR during their college years, its impact on their personal and professional life, and the key takeaways.

This diversification aimed to understand students' perceptions of USR, and to uncover any differences/alterations in their awareness and value for USR initiatives according to their level of engagement throughout their time spent at university. Also, to explore 'if' and 'how' USR might have impacted alumni's life after graduation.

The sample size, which reached twenty-five interviews, was set upon developing a 'saturated theory', when further interviews did not generate new information (Danermark et al., 2019). According to Braun and Clarke (2021) in their research examining the concept of data saturation and the sample size rational in qualitative research that uses thematic analysis, the existing literature affirms that data saturation cannot be fully predetermined prior to the collection of data, and is

rather subjective, not restricted to a single definition. It is therefore up to the researcher to judge when the interpretation of generated data suffices (Low, 2019) in bringing about meaningful information and conclusions. While many oppose this idea of data saturation and claim more often than not that data saturation can be reached (Bernard, 2000; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998), new concepts have been introduced to alleviate the contradictory situation. For instance, 'theoretical sufficiency' has been presented as an alternative to data saturation, which implies that researchers stop data mining when they have reached a sufficient amount of information to build conclusions (Dey, 1999). On that basis, the sample population of twenty-five interviewees, seemed satisfactory to generate results, considering the richness and depth of the collected information. Table 7 below presents the number of respondents in each category:

Table 7. Respondents categories with number of participants.

Status	Number of Participants	Percentage of sample population
Students (STD)	8	32%
Alumni (ALM)	5	20%
Faculty (FAC)	4	16%
Staff (STF)	2	8%
Executive Officers (EO)	6	24%
Total	**25**	**100%**

The interviews were conducted either at the university premises while respecting social distancing and complying with the COVID-19 safety measures, or online during lockdown periods. The recorded interviews lasted on average 45 to 90 minutes, and reached 120 minutes in some cases. They were transcribed, revised for accuracy, then labeled to ensure participants' anonymity and non-traceability. The interviews were securely stored on a password-protected device in compliance with the confidentiality promised to participants in the consent form.

Although students are considered key stakeholders for universities (Guilbault, 2016; Vázquez et al., 2015) and a main element in this study, however, academic and non-academic staff play a vital role in shaping students' experiences and perceptions about the institution. Moreover, faculty's level of interest and commitment to social responsibility is crucial to the university's social engagement. Their belief in this concept is reflected through their mandates. They would inject it into their teaching, research, outreach and external activities, and thus into students' minds, souls, and values. Through their direct interaction with students, faculty play a key role in shaping students' understanding and appreciation for social responsibility, and solicit their interest and engagement inside and outside the campus walls. Depicting staff and faculty's understanding,

engagement, and commitment to USR affects largely the outcomes and impact on the students-recipients. In addition, examining students' awareness and receptiveness to the diverse university's socially responsible initiatives, will pave the way for spotting any strength and weakness areas to build upon the final recommendations of the study.

4.4.4 Thematic Analysis

Generally, in qualitative methods, data collection, analysis and reporting of outcomes happen concurrently and in an interrelated way (Creswell, 2007). Yet, Guba and Lincoln (1982) argued that the use of a structured approach ensures trustworthiness of the findings emerging from the qualitative analysis. In their view, trustworthiness stems from four criteria. First is credibility, (similar to internal validity in quantitative analysis), that is when "*the data sources (most often humans) find the inquirer's analysis, formulation, and interpretations to be credible (believable*)". Second is transferability (external validity) or the degree of generalizability achieved in some instances based on a "*thick description"* of the context. Third is dependability (reliability), which is the replicability in a different place/time *"after discounting such conscious and unpredictable (but rational and logical) changes".* Last is confirmability in which *"the onus of objectivity ought, therefore, to be removed from the inquirer and placed on data* (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.246-247).

The reliance of qualitative studies on creating knowledge based on individuals' experiences (Sandelowski, 2004), imposes rigor and the adoption of a structured approach to produce trustworthy (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), significant, and valuable outcomes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Hence the choice of thematic analysis, which is a practical approach commonly adopted by early career researchers, used to examine participants' perspectives on the research topic, identify resemblances and variances pertinent to the research questions, and reveal unforeseen insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). This widely used method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for "*identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set*" (Nowell et al., 2017, p.2) enables a methodical approach to managing information, and facilitates the development of a coherent and structured final report (King, 2004).

Since the transcribed data of the numerous lengthy interviews was huge, it necessitated the use of NVivo 12 software to allow effective data management and coding of themes for the depth and sophistication of the study (King, 2004). Through NVivo, the collected information was organized and reviewed thoroughly, while the emerging themes were coded and categorized in preparation for the analysis and interpretation. Then, the organized data was used to develop a table, which

enables a visual representation of the qualitative data, and facilitate the extraction of first-order and second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013; Gioia, 2021). This step seemed crucial to identify patterns and retrieve emerging themes. This whole process compelled several rounds of back and forth review of the data, codes, and themes, which was facilitated by NVivo, as it permits searching huge data sets efficiently.

4.5 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Ethics represent an integral part of any research work. It may be even more crucial in a study on social responsibility, since ethics constitute a key component of CSR, which is defined by Carroll to be encompassing "*the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time*" (Carroll, 2016, p.2). As ethical dilemmas— mostly on confidentiality and change/ withdrawal of access to an institution among others—occur quite more frequently than considered or expected, a sound planning is essential prior to diving into the research process (Crowther & Lauesen, 2017).

With the current study revolving around USR, ethics and values hold a particular importance and are treated with utmost attention. Ethical concerns that might arise throughout this research have been thoughtfully considered and addressed through planned measures in compliance with Northumbria University's Ethics policies and procedures. The confidentiality of participants, securing their consent based on clear information on the purpose of the study, and transparency in reporting the research process to facilitate replicability, seem key issues with impact on the quality, validity, and robustness of the research process (Crowther & Lauesen, 2017). In this regard, Murphy and Dingwall (2001, p.399) claim that the 'ethical theory' is related to "*non-maleficence…beneficence… autonomy…justice"*, hence researchers' commitment to avoiding harm, conducting beneficial research, respecting participants' standards and choices, in addition to equal treatment to all. Therefore, ensuring participants' anonymity, interests, and safety represent basic ethical requirements in research. Moreover, in qualitative data collection through interviews in particular, guaranteeing interviewees' confidentiality and privacy through a signed consent form reduces hesitation, and enables ease and comfort in disclosing information, which increases interviews' productivity. In addition, providing a detailed and transparent description of the conducted research and its conditions allows validation of the results and replicability of the study (Crowther & Lauesen, 2017). Not to mention the importance of loyalty, when the research is conducted within an academic environment where both the participants and the researcher are

members of the examined institution. Therefore, integrity and respect for the institution's code of ethics and code of conduct are crucial.

In this study, prior to data collection, ethics approvals were secured from Northumbria University, as well as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Lebanese American University where the interviews are taking place. These approvals ensure the rigor of the developed semi-structured interviewing format (Lincoln, 2005). In addition, an interview consent form, which provides a clear description of the purpose and value of the study, and the participant's rights—mainly on freedom of participation and withdrawal, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality—is signed by 'adult' participants prior to each interview. Besides, considering the subject of the study and the nature of the discussed content, with no request for personal or sensitive information unrelated to the study, there seems to be no risk of physical or psychological harm, impropriety, or conflict of interest. Since encryption is particularly important when conducting several interviews within the same institution to ensure participants' anonymity (Flick, 2009), the data collected through recorded interviews is accurately transcribed and anonymized through labeling, to avoid traceability of participants. Then, it is stored on a password-protected device, in compliance with the Northumbria's data storage and retention guidelines. Integrity and loyalty must govern the whole process, through which any emerging unpredicted ethical concerns will be treated with extreme care and sensitivity.

Despite the careful ethical considerations and the systematic approach applied in this qualitative study throughout the process of data collection, data management, and analysis to generate the findings, some limitations related to the research methods could be noted. These will be discussed explicitly in the concluding chapter. First is the sample size, which is limited to twenty-five interviewees representing diverse groups of internal stakeholders. Second is the data collection from a single Lebanese private university within in a specific geographic and cultural context. And last is the adoption of a qualitative approach, which offers in-depth insights, yet less power to generalize the study findings, compared to quantitative methods with data collected from a large sample size. Not to mention time constraints and delayed interviews due to total lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next chapter will present the key findings resulting from twenty-five in-depth interviews, focused on depicting stakeholders' understanding and perceptions about USR, and its value to achieve desirable institutional outcomes that impact the viability and progress of the university.

Chapter 5: Qualitative Study Findings

5.1 Introduction

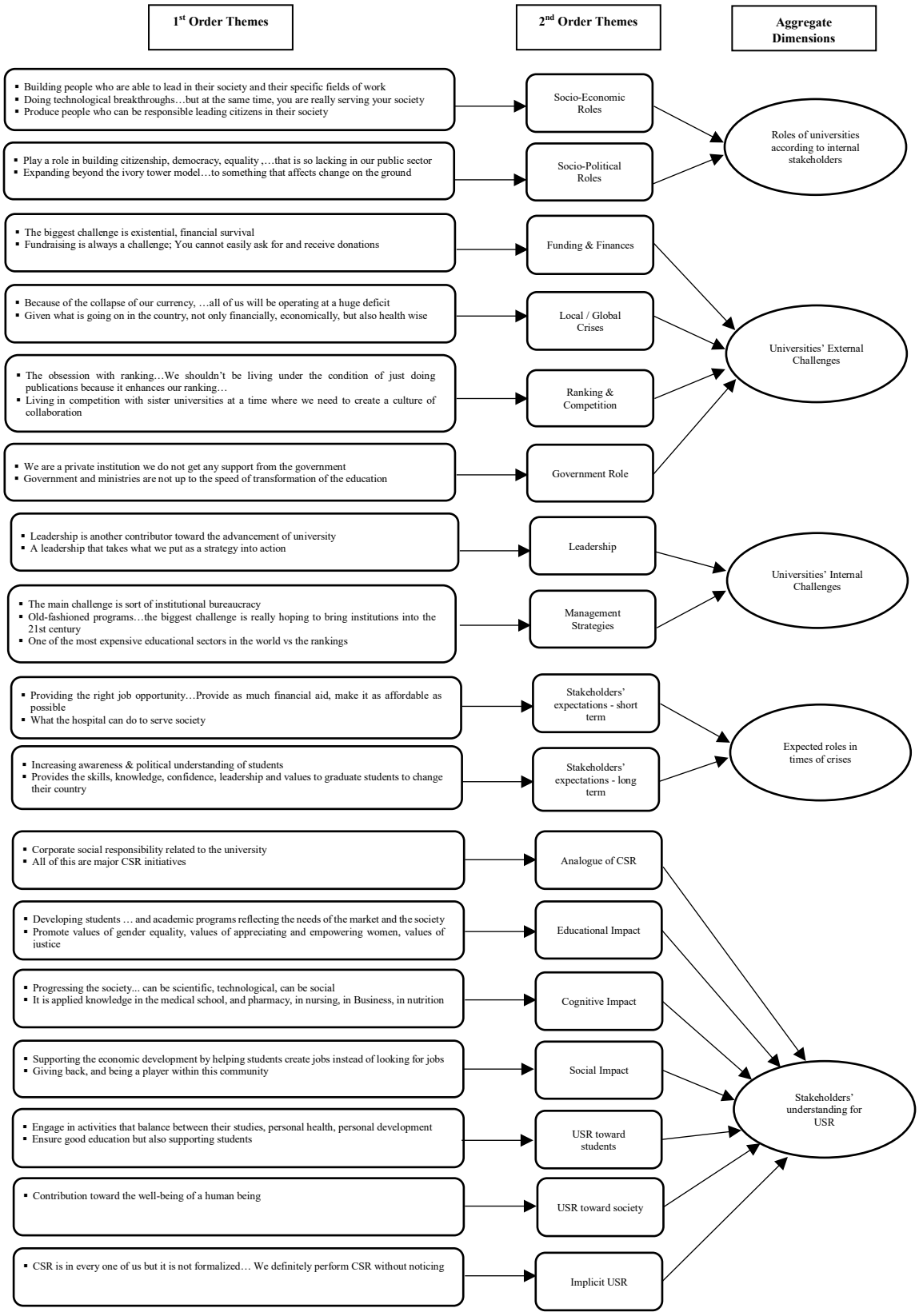
The purpose of this research is to entice Lebanese private universities to engage in a strategic USR implementation across teaching, research, extension activities, and management. This can be achieved by establishing a strong rationale, such as a positive relationship among USR, enrolment, and funding enhancement, which constitute major challenges for universities worldwide. Grounded in the Stakeholder Theory, this study explores the impact of USR enrolment and funding enhancement, which once affirmed, would drive USR institutionalization. This is believed to help universities fulfil their 'third mission', answer their stakeholders' needs and expectations, and achieve competitiveness to ensure sustainability and progress.

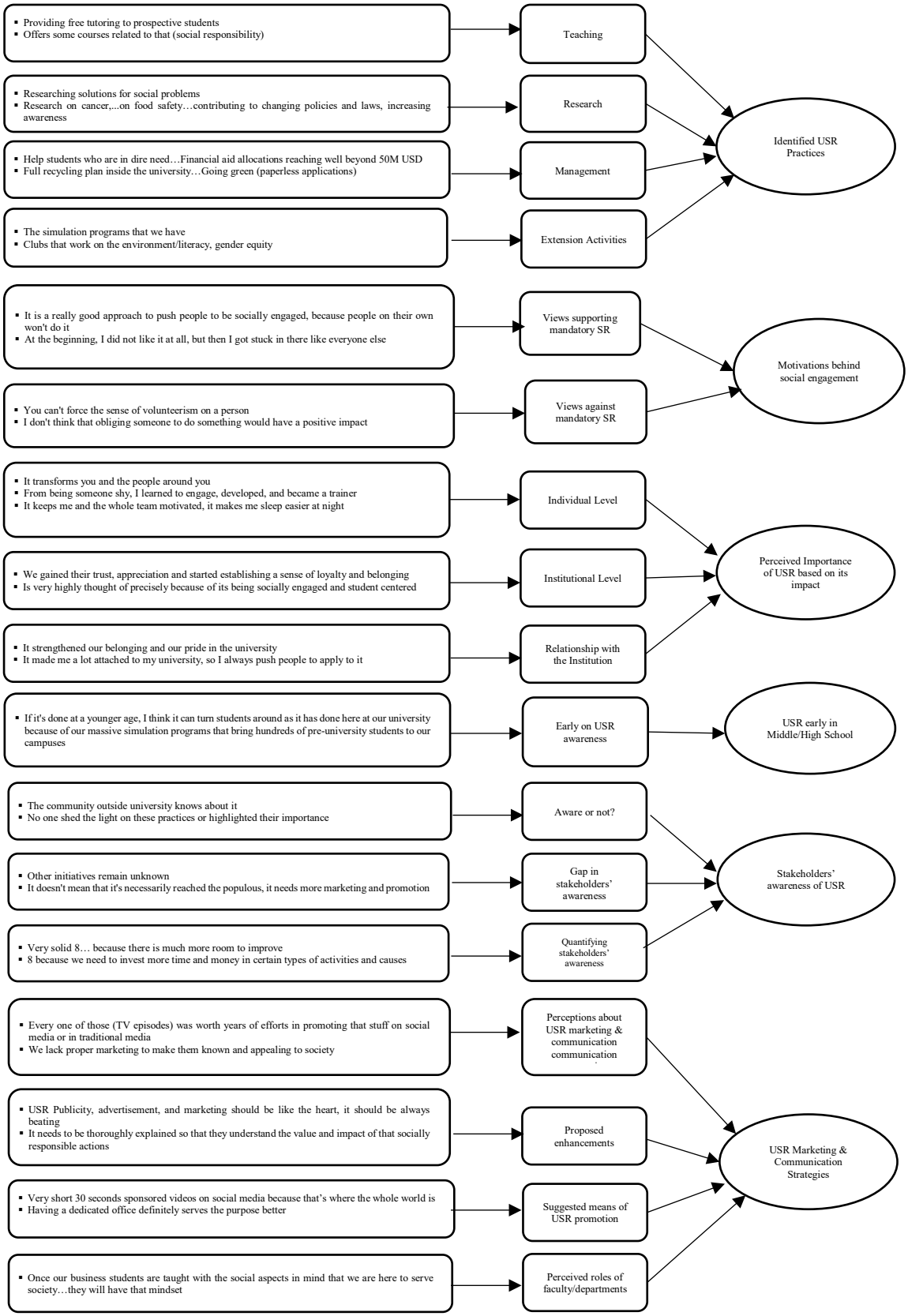
This chapter depicts the key findings, which emerged from the thematic analysis of data collected from twenty-five in-depth interviews focused on portraying the impact of USR on stakeholders' perceptions and related outcomes within the Stakeholder Theory framework. The findings based on the aggregate dimensions displayed in Table 8, captured participants' perceptions about the environment where universities operate, the pressures these institutions are facing, and how this is shaping their expected response in terms of USR. They also generated themes related to understanding the USR concept and its practices, its perceived importance and the value of USR education early on. In addition to themes on USR awareness with a focus on marketing and communication, and the elements for a successful USR institutionalization, which will help universities address their challenges. A comprehensive overview of these themes will be provided in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

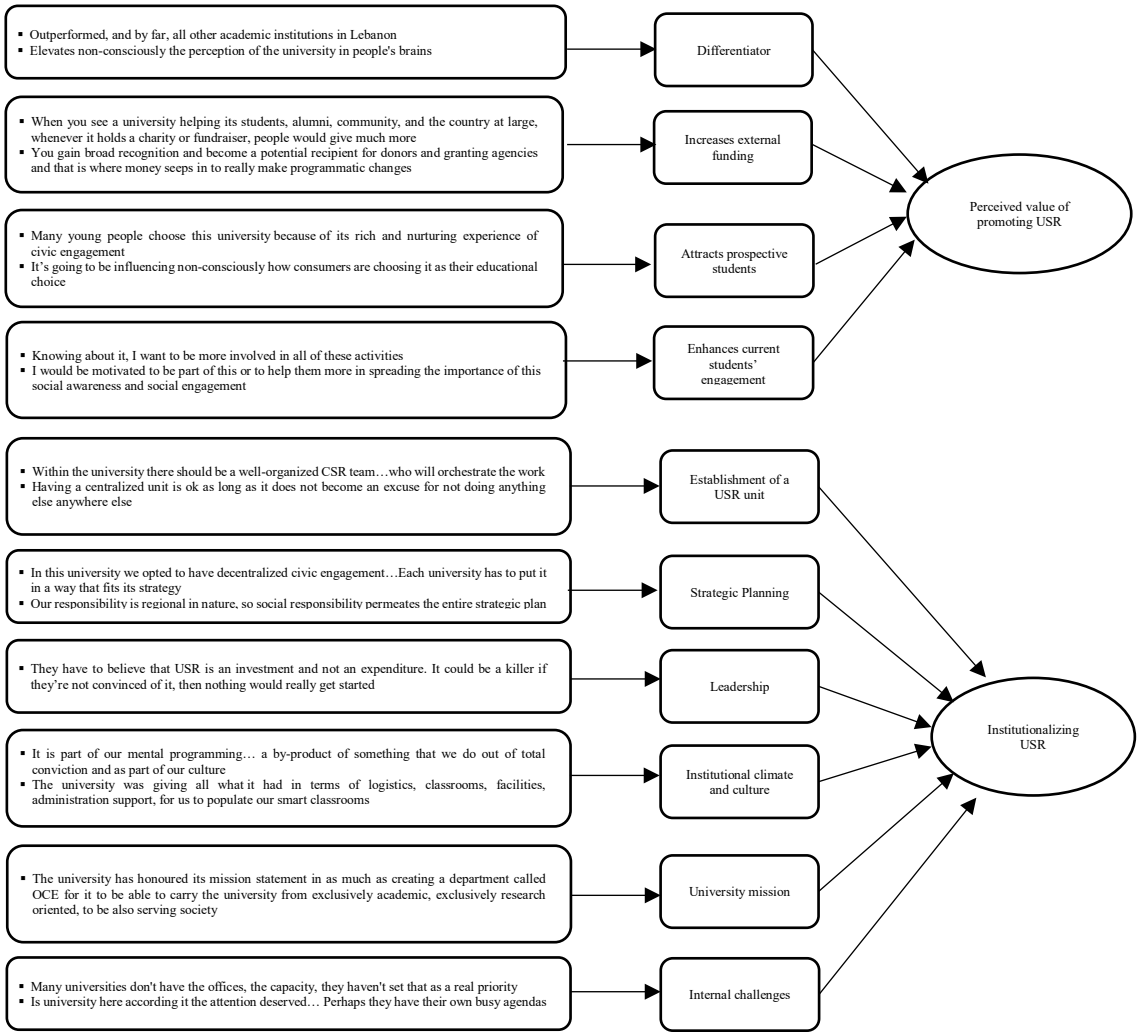
5.2 Key Findings

The information collected from interviews, organized via NVivo, and reported in a lengthy table (nearly 32 pages) for visual representation, resulted in unexpectedly rich and abundant data, favourable to feed the sought depth and breadth of the study. Below is a summary table (Table 8) presenting highlights of the original lengthy one:

Table 8. Summary of 1st order and 2nd order themes, and aggregate dimensions (Gioia, 2013).




Providing free tutoring to prospective students
Offers some courses related to that (social responsibility)
Teaching
Researching solutions for social problems
Research on cancer,...on food safety…contributing to changing policies and laws, increasing awareness
Research
Help students who are in dire need…Financial aid allocations reaching well beyond 50M USD
Full recycling plan inside the university…Going green (paperless applications)
Management
The simulation programs that we have
Clubs that work on the environment/literacy, gender equity
Extension Activities
Identified USR Practices
It is a really good approach to push people to be socially engaged, because people on their own won't do it
At the beginning, I did not like it at all, but then I got stuck in there like everyone else
Views supporting mandatory SR
You can't force the sense of volunteerism on a person
I don't think that obliging someone to do something would have a positive impact
Views against mandatory SR
Motivations behind social engagement
It transforms you and the people around you
From being someone shy, I learned to engage, developed, and became a trainer
It keeps me and the whole team motivated, it makes me sleep easier at night
Individual Level
We gained their trust, appreciation and started establishing a sense of loyalty and belonging
Is very highly thought of precisely because of its being socially engaged and student centered
Institutional Level
It strengthened our belonging and our pride in the university
It made me a lot attached to my university, so I always push people to apply to it
Relationship with the Institution
Perceived Importance of USR based on its impact
If it's done at a younger age, I think it can turn students around as it has done here at our university because of our massive simulation programs that bring hundreds of pre-university students to our campuses
Early on USR awareness
USR early in Middle/High School
The community outside university knows about it
No one shed the light on these practices or highlighted their importance
Aware or not?
Other initiatives remain unknown
It doesn't mean that it's necessarily reached the populous, it needs more marketing and promotion
Gap in stakeholders' awareness
Very solid 8… because there is much more room to improve
8 because we need to invest more time and money in certain types of activities and causes
Quantifying stakeholders' awareness
Stakeholders' awareness of USR
Every one of those (TV episodes) was worth years of efforts in promoting that stuff on social media or in traditional media
We lack proper marketing to make them known and appealing to society
Perceptions about USR marketing & communication
USR Publicity, advertisement, and marketing should be like the heart, it should be always beating
It needs to be thoroughly explained so that they understand the value and impact of that socially responsible actions
Proposed enhancements
Very short 30 seconds sponsored videos on social media because that's where the whole world is
Having a dedicated office definitely serves the purpose better
Suggested means of USR promotion
Once our business students are taught with the social aspects in mind that we are here to serve society…they will have that mindset
Perceived roles of faculty/departments
USR Marketing & Communication Strategies



The summary Table 8 provides insights on the process adopted to extract the themes based on Gioia et al. (2013). This resulted in an extensive list of themes generated from patterns, resemblances, and commonalities in participants' testimonies about their relationship with the university and their perceptions about its USR. Themes included participants' understanding for the roles of university, the perceived internal and external challenges, universities' expected contributions in times of crises, interviewees' perceptions and awareness of USR, the identified practices, the impact-based importance of USR, the role of marketing and communication in promoting USR and its value, the motivation behind social engagement, USR early on in middle and high schools, and USR institutionalization. The thematic analysis revealed that the emerging themes can be regrouped into two main areas. The first one includes themes revolving around the environment in which universities operate, the threats, and the challenges that affect their strategic and managerial decisions. While the second area relates to the USR concept and how its implementation will help

universities address the faced challenges. These two areas encompassing the generated aggregate dimensions will be discussed thoroughly in the following sections.

5.3 Perceived Roles of Universities

Participants' perceptions about the roles of universities constituted an opening question to set the stage and help them connect with the topic. Although the literature identified various roles, interviewees mostly noted the social, economic, and political roles, which are key to leading national transformation and the advancement of some countries more than others (Goransson & Brundenius, 2011).

Serving society, addressing its challenges, and creating solutions for global issues through education, research/technological advancement, and civic engagement were common statements by all groups of participants, *"Doing technological breakthroughs…but at the same time, you are really serving your society"* (EO4). Through educating individuals, universities build future leaders and positively impact the socio-economic and political aspects of societies and countries. They also develop students' skills and expand their networks, which boost their employability, personal, and professional development. Interviewees' perceptions of universities' roles echoed the literature on higher education, which described universities as a major player/contributor to societal growth, the development of skilled human capital, and the creation of sustainable solutions for socio-economic issues (Castells, 2001; Karatzoglou, 2013; TFHES, 2000).

In addition, executive officers and faculty noted universities' political role in instilling ethics and values of "*citizenship, democracy, equality, equity…that are so lacking in our public sector*"(EO2) to induce the progress of the nation. They described universities as "*change makers",* by preparing new leaders who engage in the political life or occupy governmental positions, which can effect socio-political transformation leading to real change on the ground (Brennan et al., 2004). Through proper youth education, universities can contribute to saving Lebanon from corruption and bankruptcy.

5.4 Perceived Challenges for Lebanese Private Universities

5.4.1 Funding and Finances

Private universities in Lebanon, similar to any HEI worldwide, are confronted by external and internal challenges that affect their strategies and operations to a varying degree. However, in a small country where they are 'left on their own' without public support, funding appeared by far

the most challenging, especially with the economic crisis that burst in October 2019 and kept growing like a snowball. "*The biggest challenge is existential, financial survival. First and foremost, we have to make sure that the university is sustainable in terms of its finances"*(EO2), with these words, one of the executive officers summarized the main concern of all Lebanese private universities. Noting that the financial aspect invaded almost every participant's answer on the challenges since 'money' is vital for all university functions.

The largest source of revenue for these institutions is tuition fees supported by fundraising, which is a key pillar and "*an integral built-in embedded aspect of a private university"*(EO6), in addition to gifts and donations. Fundraising has been essential to provide financial aid to underprivileged students ensuring their equal access to quality education. As for research collaboration with industries for additional funding sources, it is not a common practice in Lebanon with the limited manufacturing industry. Research funding has been relying mostly on grants and rarely on fundraising and sponsors.

5.4.2 National and Global Crises

The socio-economic and political crises in the country had a toll on private universities, which have been constantly pressured into increasing their funds, as they rely mainly on enrolment and fundraising. One of the executive officers declared, "*because of the collapse of our currency, we cannot balance our budgets. All of us will be operating at a huge deficit"*(EO2). Another executive warned, "*because of the current crisis*, *education is at risk*"(EO1). A third one questioned whether we will "*witness a future decline in standards*"(EO3), while others feared that the effects of the crises expand beyond impacting university functions to putting at stake the viability of all Lebanese private universities. "*They are paying us monopoly money…I am not sure we can sustain it, alone we can't sustain it. Definitely we need the international support, funding, government support"*(EO2). The skyrocketing inflation rate, collapse of the currency, high corruption, and sectarianism in a country "*hijacked by politicians"*(EO2), are driving these institutions toward the unknown. With a financial crisis described as "*one of the most severe global crises episodes*" (World Bank, June 2021), Lebanese private universities which rely essentially on enrolment are in dire need for other resources to compensate for their undermined income due to considerable currency devaluation.

The shallow mention of the global pandemic among the challenges imposed by crises was quite surprising. Although COVID-19 deeply impacted HEIs worldwide for almost two years now, only one executive officer mentioned it in a trivial way "*Given what is going on in the country, not only*

financially, economically, monetarily, but also health wise"(EO3). The use of three consecutive terms related to money reveals unarguably that people are totally consumed by this unprecedented economic crisis. As finances became "*an existential issue*" in Lebanon, other concerns faded away.

5.4.3 Rankings and Competition

Another challenge raised by faculty members was "*the obsession with ranking, living in a competition with sister universities at a time where we need to create a culture of collaboration"*(FAC1). With the growing importance accorded to university rankings amid the fierce competition over students and funds (Nixon, 2012), the ranking issue has been dominating many of the practices and management strategies of universities. An executive officer highlighted the value given to ranking by stating, "*You cannot move forward as a university, to secure good visibility, good funds, to attract good faculty, good students, without ranking"*(EO7). He described ranking as a *"prerequisite",* which is not regarded as a *"goal"* by itself but a *"means"* to ensure the continuity of the university. He added:

> *"We do sacrifice things for ranking. And definitely the ranking game will continue to be played. We cannot stop it, because, again, this is our vehicle to go out of Lebanon. It's our vehicle to attract local and international students"*(EO7).

Since reputation and ranking made it to the list of factors affecting students' choice of university (Brown, 2015), to enhance their ranking and attractiveness, universities have been prioritizing the number of publications/citations over the research impact:

> *"It's pushing people to publish more and sometimes publish less quality, less mature research, and maybe playing the citing game. Sometimes it becomes maybe a little bit unethical, I mean, it's on the borderline of unethical"*(FAC2).

Yet, faculty expressed that they would have preferred focusing more on applied research addressing societal issues, supporting local businesses, and serving economic development, instead of "*just creating papers and ranks".*

Some institutions have even tied ranking to a 'points' system for promotion, which made faculty feel like "*living under the condition of just doing publications because it enhances our ranking. If the ranking would lead us not to work or collaborate with each other and with other universities, better without it"*(FAC4). In a small country like Lebanon, enrolment yields are mostly affected by tuition fees rather than local rankings. Faculty shared that the pressure implied to publish for gaining points is depriving them the freedom of being creative and volunteering in community

projects that produce impact rather than advance rankings. They feel that *"currently, this is not considered or valued by university"*(FAC1).

There seems to be a disagreement on the ranking issue between the university administration represented by the interviewed executive officers and faculty members. The former considered the ranking essential for benchmarking and market competitiveness. This is how they justify blindly gearing research to serve the institution's ranking, sometimes at the expense of quality/impact and faculty's freedom to invest more efforts in community service. While faculty appeared resentful and discontent with being pushed toward unwanted directions. They were also unappreciative of the pressure placed on them and the 'doubtfully' ethical citing practices that are being reinforced.

5.4.4 Absence of the Government Role

Faculty and executive officers also complained about the lack of governmental support for private universities, not even with the extreme circumstances the country is going through.
They affirmed the absence of national strategies:

> "*Unfortunately in Lebanon, the government doesn't design educational strategies at the national level, each minister sets strategies according to the benefit of his political party. That is why it will remain a continuous failure"*(EO1).

They also noted the ministry of HE's inability to keep up with the transformation in the HE industry. For instance, it still does not accredit online degrees although all schools and universities in the country, be it public or private, have been delivering fully online for almost two years. Faculty also reported the ministries' lack of interaction or strategic partnerships with universities, except for a minimal collaboration limited to endorsement in data collection for research purposes, or to the shared research findings that could advance national policies, but mostly remain unimplemented.

5.4.5 Leadership and Management Strategies

In addition to the external challenges that encompass funding, socio-economic and political crises, ranking and competition, and the absence of the government role, the interviewees highlighted internal challenges related to leadership and management strategies.

Both executive officers and faculty pinpointed the crucial role of the leadership in taking the university to the next level. They described it as another "*contributor toward the advancement of the university*"(EO1). Yet, they thought that the real challenge is having a leadership that translates strategies into actions and synchronizes the efforts within the institution. Not to mention the

leader's role in spreading a positive culture and instilling a sense of belonging among the university constituents by always reminding them that *"they belong to the university family*"(EO3).

They also noted challenges related to management strategies such as the actualization of the set plans, since many institutions "*have great reports drafted but not acted upon"*(EO1). They fail to realize their mission and goals to build future leaders and engage in volunteerism, either because of institutional bureaucracy or the lack of capacity, offices and other resources, which haven't been prioritized. Students depicted challenges in relation to the programs and tuition fees. They pointed out the rigidity of the education system where "*the curriculum hasn't changed"* and many universities still have "*old-fashioned programs"*(EO2). Despite that, the tuition fees are high and "*overpriced",* which led students to question the quality/value of the received education considering the modest global ranking of Lebanese universities, *"the amount we pay and the ranking we get and the quality of education do not resonate"*(STD6). Human capital and their loyalty to the institution represented an additionally challenging element mentioned by executive officers. People's passion and commitment to serve the institution and its mission despite all hardships are as critical as funding to the sustainability of the university.

All of these factors reported by interviewees as major external and internal challenges can hinder the sustainability and growth of the institution.

5.5 Expected Contributions in Times of Crises

Since the interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and eight to twenty months following the burst of the economic and financial crises in Lebanon, it wasn't surprising to hear some expected contributions beyond the traditional roles of universities, although the latter, similar to all organizations operating locally, have been deeply affected by the crises and are suffering eradication of resources.

Students noted the university's liability to expand support by increasing financial aid/scholarships, setting lenient policies for tuition fee settlement, and keeping education accessible and affordable, which is essential to effect change in the country. Executive officers seemed to clearly acknowledge this obligation:

> *"There is more that can be done for us reaching out and helping in this country that's collapsing…We do have a responsibility to educate our young, provide as much financial aid, make it as affordable as possible, so that they can go out there and try to make a better Lebanon for us"*(EO2).

They reported that, when the crisis struck, the university management wasted no time identifying their priorities. They froze salary increases, put on hold capital projects, and geared their efforts toward social responsibility. They did not increase tuition fees and worked relentlessly on providing utmost financial support to students. They established an Emergency Fund, which to their surprise, attracted a lot of "*people we don't know"* to donate, and generated well over a million dollars. Alumni expected support in finding job opportunities. In fact, the rising student consumerism, which shifted the power toward students, was coupled with a growing sense of entitlement and expectations that the university must secure them highly paying jobs upon graduation in return for the tuition fees or incurred loans (Collini, 2017). As for faculty and staff, they thought of salary adjustments and relief measures to compensate for the currency devaluation, which reduced their purchasing power considerably. This aligns with an executive officer's opinion on what is needed at this time, which is "*bringing fresh dollars into the economy and keeping the talent in Lebanon through incentive packages*"(EO4), and this is how universities "*contribute to alleviating the effects of the economic crisis"*(EO7).

Since the university owns a hospital, all interviewees expected medical support to society during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its contribution through the mobile clinic delivering COVID-19 related services (testing, vaccination) in remote areas and the national vaccination campaign seemed a 'given' for the university community, *"This is how the university can give back to society and it is expected nowadays to do so"*(STF2).

Interestingly, a student noted that the university can "*increase its radiance of impact on a much greater level without incurring a lot of expenses"*(STD4), for example by involving its Nutrition and Medical students interested in volunteering and community service. Other students launched a quest for universities to find new ways to engage their students in a virtual campus life and volunteering opportunities. The total shift to online teaching and delivery of services, minimized human interaction, which is a key aspect of civic engagement, and deprived students for almost two years from the enriching campus life experience and various opportunities to learn and practice social responsibility. These expectations appeared as a direct expression of each group's short-term needs originating from the economic, financial, and health crises in the country.

On the long-term, with the rising concerns about the quality of education, executive officers and faculty asserted that universities have a "*big role right now to play"*(EO7). They hoped for efforts to keep graduating top notch students, who even if they left the country, will find a way to support

and help revive Lebanon. They also expected more socio-political awareness/education to increase students' understanding for the meaning and importance of change to lead a corrective transformation in the corrupt political system, which led to the current economic and financial crises. They believed that universities' role nowadays is critical more than ever to provide the youth with *"the skills, the knowledge, the confidence, the leadership and the values for them to graduate and change their country"*(EO2).

In brief, special times require special measures. At times of crises, universities are expected to focus on the current needs of their community and deploy their resources to serve society, regardless of their previous level of social engagement. Nevertheless, will all the universities lend a hand at critical times? According to students, "*Especially now with the economic crisis... we expect all universities to do this, but maybe not all universities will take the initiative to do that"*(STD3). An alumnus described the university's proactivity in addressing the pandemic as *"a big shot really! This doesn't happen every day in a small country with limited resources, with a collision of crises like Lebanon"*(ALM5). The university managed to get funds and tried to equip its medical center with the requisite infrastructure overnight, to ensure a meaningful contribution in the fight against COVID-19. These statements reflected that even in extreme conditions, when any small initiative or contribution would make a difference in alleviating the detrimental effects of the crises, there will always be universities, which play a passive role 'waiting for the storm to pass'.

The key themes presented above frame the environment where universities operate, which will substantially shape their decisions and management strategies. All participants recognized the socio-economic roles of universities, and a few mentioned the political role. Moreover, most of the challenges identified were commonly global, especially funding, crises, and rankings. These pressures appeared genuinely linked to the expanding needs and expectations for each group of interviewees.

These themes provided a flavour of participants' perceptions about the roles of universities, as well as external and internal challenges, which incapacitate private universities in Lebanon and impact stakeholders' expectations. This effect was evident in the short-term and long-term interventions they expected from universities to attend to their growing needs and offer them the desired support. The following sections revolve around the concept of USR, its practices, perceived importance, and the value of engaging in USR early on. Other themes will discuss the level of USR awareness, the role of marketing and communication strategies, the perceived value of promoting USR, as well

as the essentials for a successful USR implementation, which will help universities address their challenges and respond to stakeholders' growing needs and expectations.

5.6 The Definitions of USR Based on Stakeholders' Perceptions

Asking all interviewees about their understanding for the term "University Social Responsibility" and its connotations resulted in answers comparable to USR definitions in the literature on higher education. The majority described it as the analogue of CSR in universities, it is *"corporate social responsibility related to the university"*(STD7). They believed this concept is not new to universities and is expressed through their contribution to *"building good citizens"*(EO1), or their fundraising activities to support students. Having more than 50% of the student body on financial aid is an indicator of university's CSR and its care for youth education and for society. They added, *"Unlike companies, universities do no harm at all"*(EO1). Whatever they do in terms of serving students, educating them, and helping them create jobs through innovation and entrepreneurship centers, all of this constitutes *"major CSR initiatives"* that feed the economic development of the country.

They also noted the tacit nature of 'universities' CSR', which is embodied in their mission and intuitive efforts to support students, provide them equal access to quality education, and develop *"responsible leading citizens"*(EO6). With statements such as *"what we do is CSR indirectly"*(EO1), *"we definitely perform CSR without noticing"*(FAC1), *and "CSR is in every one of us but it is not formalized"*(EO3), interviewees denoted the implicit social role of universities to educate students and instill in them ethics and values, which was highlighted by Dima et al. (2013).

A small group understood USR based on its impacts on various levels, which resonates with Vallaeys (2007), who defined this concept through determining the effects of the university functions on its surrounding at the educational, cognitive, organizational, and social levels. On the educational level, respondents linked USR to graduating responsible citizens and leaders who promote values like gender equality and women empowerment, and to *"developing students' personalities to be more socially aware, ethical, compassionate"*(STF2). They believed these traits can be acquired throughout students' educational journey by interacting with faculty, volunteering, joining student clubs and participating in cultural events. On the cognitive level, its impact stems from the relevance and usefulness of the provided knowledge and education. It is when the university "*develops academic programs reflecting the needs of the market and the society"*(FAC4), "*it is applied knowledge…in everything that we do, always at the service of*

society"(EO6). On the organizational level, initiatives like recycling and going green with paperless applications were considered as USR, showing care for the environment and reducing the university's negative footprints, which students can learn and replicate beyond campus. As for the social impact, participants referred to the university's response to students/stakeholders/society's needs and its contribution to the socio-economic development. Their examples mentioned the generous financial aid packages and the equal opportunity for learning without discrimination. Another group of respondents differentiated between USR toward students and toward society. Students, staff, and faculty focused on USR toward students and the university's responsibility to support them and contribute to their development. While executive officers and alumni focused more on USR toward society, serving it and contributing to its advancement.

The various ways in which the respondents expressed their understanding for USR reflected the different directions and the lack of consensus on a single definition of this concept in the literature. Yet, they all affirmed USR as a stakeholders' focused approach, as presented by Esfijani et al. (2013), following their typology developed to identify the main themes of USR and suggest a comprehensive description out of 18 analyzed definitions.

5.7 USR Practices Identified by Stakeholders

Participants identified numerous socially responsible practices, which they took part in or witnessed across all university functions.

In teaching and educational services, all interviewees had examples of mandatory (part of a curriculum) or elective courses with content related to social responsibility, sustainability, and ethics across all schools and programs. For instance, the zero-credit Civic Engagement* course mandatory for all Business students, and the community service project* in fulfilment of the USAID University Scholarship Program. Some participants considered the high-quality education and the up-to-date content delivered as an exhibition of social responsibility, since they contribute to developing future leaders able to advance society. Others mentioned the free tutoring services for prospective students, and the centers/institutes dedicated for topical issues such as women and gender studies among others.

In research, limited answers touched upon USR. Expectedly, these were provided by a couple of faculty members personally engaged in responsible research. They noted the engagement of students and faculty from programs like Engineering, Biology, and Nutrition in researching

solutions for social problems, for which they gave the example of the exoskeleton*. One of them claimed:

> "*Research wise, I think our department is the most involved in community service because science has a direct effect on people. We are known for our research on cancer, on non-communicable diseases, on food safety, which are contributing to changing policies and laws, to increasing awareness about these topics, so it is having a direct impact on society"*(FAC1).

In management, the notable 'socially responsible' strategies revolved around financial support, health and wellbeing, and respect for the environment. All participants praised the university efforts to constantly provide quality education for underprivileged students and to help those *"in dire need"*(EO2) through "*generous financial aid packages and scholarships"*(STD1) backed by *"well-planned fundraising activities"*(ALM5), such as the Emergency Financial Aid Fund*. Executive officers also mentioned the university attempts to support faculty and staff financially and help them "*sustain their purchasing power"*(EO3) during the economic crisis. Moreover, the testimonials acclaimed the health-related strategies implemented to support society and alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The university played a key role through its *"mobile clinic* that has gone everywhere in the country, doing PCR testing around Lebanon and then providing vaccines for the community"*(EO3). In addition to few eco-friendly initiatives encompassing *"a full recycling plan within university, the 'Going Green' campaign with paperless applications, and the smoking free campus"*(STF2).

In extension activities, all respondents linked students' socially responsible activities to the Outreach & Civic Engagement (OCE)* unit and the student-led clubs, as they offer a wide range of programs and activities with a direct impact on students and society. The students and alumni passionately shared their personal experiences with the simulation programs, outreach activities and student clubs, which develop students' leadership and sense of citizenship, and advances their skills for a greater employability. They talked about the Model United Nations (MUN)* trainings for middle and high school students and their roles as trainers. In addition to other major events such as Arts & Sciences Fairs for high school students, activities related to road safety awareness*, orphans, elderly, human rights, equality and inclusion, beaches cleaning, tutoring for public schools' students, fundraising for special causes, among others. Not to mention students' volunteerism and contribution to the community and affected families post Beirut blast in various ways (cleaning, reconstruction, distribution of food boxes/clothes/medication, fundraising, etc.). The majority noted that these initiatives, which *"provided opportunities for students to grow and to give back"*(ALM1), were encouraged and well supported by the university administration.

Table 9 below provides a brief description of major USR initiatives/projects pinpointed by the interviewees across various university functions:

Table 9. Identified USR initiatives at LAU, categorized by university function.

Area	Initiative	Description
Teaching	Civic Engagement - Zero credit - Business core requirement*	Mandatory zero credit (Pass/Fail basis) course for all students in the B.S. Business Studies program. It is a guided community service experience based on a plan designed by the School in cooperation with the OCE unit, according to which students are placed at NGOs. They submit a final report in addition to a report from the NGO.
	Community Service Project*/ USAID University Scholarship Program (USP)	In fulfilment of the leadership component, students have to implement a community service project in their towns and villages.
Research	The Exoskeleton project* by Engineering faculty and students	This invention provides a paralyzed person the sufficient balance to be able to stand-up and later walk and climb stairs. This invention relies solely on the person's body energy, which makes it light, cost effective.
Management	The Outreach and Civic Engagement Unit (OCE)*	Established in 2010 as a translation of the university's commitment to its mission: *"academic excellence, student-centeredness, civic engagement, the education of the whole person and the formation of leaders in a diverse world"*
	LAU Mobile Clinic * (up-to-June 2022: 262 towns and villages 11,759 PCR tests 23, 329 Free vaccines)	*"A humanitarian initiative created jointly by LAU's School of Medicine and the Medical Center-Rizk Hospital. The mobile clinic provided citizens in remote areas with free PCR tests & Covid-19 Vaccines"* (LAU, n.d.).
	Emergency Financial Aid Fund* – "*Be the Hero of a Generation at Risk*" campaign	Launched in 2020 to support the rising needs of a large majority of the student body due to the economic crisis. The campaign raised more the one million dollars and is still open for donation.
Extension activities	The Road Safety Club*	A student club that collaborated and partnered with governmental entities and the civil society (internal security forces, the Lebanese Red Cross, the Lebanese Civil Defense,...) to raise safety awareness within and beyond campus. This club secured more than 15 interviews in daily TV shows and radio stations to feature their work.
	Global Classroom Model United Nations (GC LAU MUN)*	*"An internationally known simulation model of the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, officially and exclusively implemented by the Lebanese American University in 2005"*

5.8 Motivation Behind USR

The interviews revealed a diversity of motives for social engagement on the personal and institutional levels. Individually, social engagement was mandatory among a number of students in fulfilment of a program or scholarship requirement, such as the Civic Engagement course in the Business program or community service projects for the University Scholarship Program (USP). Otherwise, it was optional for students to take part in student clubs, simulation programs, departmental activities, or any type of volunteer work on or off-campus. Several students and alumni reported engaging in social activities for instrumental reasons such as breaking their

shyness, making friendships, building their resumes, or even challenging themselves. While, the engagement of many alumni, faculty, and staff was mostly related to their values and passion for helping others.

On the institutional level, executive officers' statements revealed that USR was sometimes purposeful, in alignment with the university mission and values, and in recognition for its responsibility to educate the youth, provide sufficient financial aid, and make education equally affordable to all, *"so that they can go out there and try to make a better Lebanon for us"*(EO2). Other times, it appeared intuitive and sporadic out of a 'passion to serve'. And in some instances, it was imposed by unusual circumstances such as national crises, when the university had to take immediate action launching an emergency fund for financial aid to support the soaring numbers of needy students and the temporary relief measures helping staff and faculty sustain the detrimental effects of the economic crisis.

Considering the transformational impact of social engagement on students in specific, faculty encouraged implementing USR as an educational component through a mandatory course. Based on their personal observations, when taught to students inside and outside the classroom, students' social engagement tends to become addictive and to last after graduation. Engaged students and alumni endorsed these claims and added that the passive participation, which accompanies mandatory social engagement might turn into an active participation following the lived experience and evoked feelings, *"At the beginning, I did not like it at all, but then I got stuck in there like everyone else"*(ALM4). Nevertheless, a couple of students voted against imposing social engagement through a mandatory course/project. For some, imposing social engagement as a requirement toward graduation might transform it into a burden and deprive them the joy of doing it voluntarily, "*you can't force the sense of volunteerism on a person"*(STD4).

5.9 Perceived Importance of USR through Stakeholders' Lens

As participants shared their personal experiences with social responsibility in the context of university, they underlined the importance of USR depicted through its impact at different levels. On the individual level, almost everyone reported the transformational effect of social engagement on themselves and the recipients, "*it transforms you and the people around you"*(STD4). Alumni and students described it as "*a life changing experience"*(ALM3) that enriched their undergraduate journey and taught them to give back to society. It transformed their values and way of thinking, expanded their personal and professional networks, and facilitated their self-exploration and self-

understanding. It also helped them develop self-esteem, build their identity, and advance their social skills, which contributed to their growth, *"from being someone shy, I learned to engage…and became a trainer"*(ALM4). Social engagement made them realize the presence of *"something that is bigger in life than just focusing on oneself"*(STD2), and it is not always about personal gains. In addition, this experience enriched their resumes and gave them a leverage when applying for jobs, being a proof of willingness to go the extra mile and engage in selfless acts. So USR becomes a vital takeaway for graduating students that pervades their personal and professional lives (Ramos et al., 2018). This transformational impact touched the beneficiaries/recipients too: *"We saw high school students transforming into leaders…how they learned to step outside of their own bubble"*(STD6). Even faculty and executive officers portrayed the strong impact of USR on them, the students, and external stakeholders using strong statements such as *"absolutely incredible"*(EO3), *" it keeps me and the whole team motivated, it makes me sleep easier at night"*(FAC2), *"you feel such a fulfilling achievement"*(EO1), *and "That's the most gratifying thing that always gives hope"*(EO2).

On the institutional level, participants' views affirmed that USR grants the university an enhanced visibility, acceptance, respect, and trust as it narrows the gap with the community, bringing them closer. They pointed out to the exposure, credibility, and growing trust that their university acquired following its bold response to the emerging crises, and how this translated into greater appreciation, praise, sense of belonging and a rising loyalty within the community. Not to mention its effect on the university image after being described as 'a university with a heart' on the social media accounts of internal stakeholders. Even in society, the university has been associated with a spirit of volunteerism, which gave it a competitive edge and ensured people buy-in and support:

> "*Many NGOs rely on our university to get volunteers because they know that our students have this civic engaged part unlike other universities' students"*, "*In terms of social responsibility…we were always a step ahead of other universities"*(FAC3).

> *"People believed in what we're doing and responded to that, "We had buy-in from the community and we had the community's interest in our events"*(ALM5).

Moreover, the impact of USR expands beyond institutional related outcomes to affect stakeholders' relationship with the university as all participants relayed heightened feelings of belonging and pride. In specific, students and alumni expressed their pride, attachment, and sense of belonging, which has been inciting them to give back and to recommend the university to others.

Despite these experienced and evidenced impactful effects, which affirm the value of USR for universities, a few students and alumni noted that social engagement's impact is sometimes limited or less evident, and its value cannot be always perceived until you engage in it and witness its positive repercussions on yourself and others, *"It starts as a little effect that goes bigger and bigger… And that's how change happens"*(STD5).

5.10 Importance of Early USR Education

"Nations, like men, are teachable only in their youth; with age they become incorrigible. Once customs are established and prejudices rooted, reform is a dangerous and fruitless enterprise". With these words of the Genevan philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, one of the executive officers deliberately expressed his conviction of the value of social responsibility education, even prior to university. He argued for the introduction of USR early in the Middle School and High School and based his recommendations on a long-standing experience and personal observations of the transformational effect that these groups of students experience when they join the simulation programs:

> *"If you do not train the student at the age of 11, 12, 13, to serve society, they become addicted to electronics and self-absorbed and they do not gain the love of serving society". "If it's done at a younger age, I think it can turn students around as it has done here at our university because of our massive simulation programs that bring hundreds of pre-university students to our campuses"*(EO4).

In fact, all the interviewed students and alumni who took part in these programs as high school students or at university spoke passionately about their experience, the way it transformed them, and the gains acquired at different levels. Most importantly, they described how it helped them develop a strong sense of social responsibility, care for society, and interest in giving back. Students who acted as trainers in these simulation programs also described the impact they have witnessed on high schoolers, seeing them transforming into leaders and "*how they learned to step outside of their own bubble"*(STD3).

This was endorsed by university students who experienced social engagement early in high school and therefore, recommended the inclusion of USR education at Lebanese schools:

> *"The Lebanese society specifically needs education on social responsibility at schools for students to engage more in community work. I come from a background where my school had a social club through which I engaged in community work. I had this preset at a younger age, but this is not very much available for students, it is not very common at schools*"(STD2).

A student concluded *"I really didn't develop a sense of volunteerism at university, but I did develop it in high school!"*(STD1), which reaffirms the value of USR awareness and promotion, not only at the university level, but also earlier in middle and high schools.

5.11 Stakeholders' Awareness of USR Practices

The discussions undertaken with participants to get a sense of what they know about USR revealed a limited knowledge of the university's accomplishments, even with the most engaged members. Their awareness was generally restricted to their status/role and level of engagement.

Almost all respondents knew about the university's contributions to alleviate the crises' impact on internal and external stakeholders, especially the financial aid emergency fund and the COVID-19 mobile clinic. Each one of them could also identify different socially responsible programs, initiatives and activities. However, their responses revealed an awareness limited to specific practices they either heard of or engaged in. Moreover, many participants acknowledged a lack of or insufficient awareness about USR among the university community. Some testimonies included statements, such as *"there are a lot of things we're unaware of"*(STD2) *and "most of the people don't have an idea about that"*(ALM2).

With almost half of the participants being students, their limited/absent awareness about USR was evident in their personal statements, *"I did not know. I didn't have this kind of information"*(STD5), *"I didn't know about all of this"*(STD7), as well in staff and faculty's testimonies, *"they are not fully aware beyond what we tell them, when we tell them about certain socially responsible initiatives they get surprised"*(STF2). This lack of knowledge is depriving them the chance to engage, transform, and make an impact. Interestingly, a faculty member blamed it on some students' social and financial status. Many of those from wealthy families care most about getting a degree and enjoying their time at university, with no interest in social work. While other faculty linked it to a lagging communication due to which *"some initiatives remain unknown"*(FAC1).

In an attempt to quantify stakeholders' awareness about USR to be able to detect any changes after providing them with more information about the university's socially responsible acts, participants were asked to rate the university's social responsibility on a scale from one to ten based on what they essentially know about it. Ratings ranged between six and eight for non-engaged members, while most of the ratings for engaged ones ranged from eight to nine over ten.

Then, participants were provided with a comprehensive overview about the USR practices undertaken by the university across its functions, following which they were asked to rate it again. As a result, most of the interviewees increased their ratings to eight, nine, and even ten over ten. They reported changing their views and enhancing their ratings once they became aware of the breadth of the university's social engagement, which impressed them. It made them feel the institution is high on CSR and contributes to the welfare of society. Only a couple of participants– both engaged students– kept their rating unchanged. The first one got his 8.5-primary rating confirmed as he was doubtful about it, *"now I am convinced it should be an 8.5"*. The second one kept his rating at seven because of an issue non-related to USR but to the 'overpriced' tuition fees, which are among the highest in the country despite the relatively modest regional ranking, which led him to keep his score at seven.

This exercise revealed a gap in stakeholders' awareness and corroborated the limited understanding and awareness about USR, which has been reported in several research studies conducted over the past decade (Ahmad, 2012; Leal Filho et al., 2019a; Pabian, 2019).

5.12 Stakeholders' Perceptions about USR Marketing and Communication Strategies

The identified gap in participants' awareness about USR shed light on the importance of awareness and value sharing for shaping stakeholders' perceptions about the university based on its social responsibility. This emphasizes the crucial role of well devised marketing and communication strategies in raising awareness and promoting USR to achieve desirable university related outcomes, such as enhanced reputation (Lo et. al., 2017; Ogunmokun & Timur, 2019), brand image (Plungpongpan et al., 2016), corporate identity (Atakan & Eker, 2007), and creating a competitive advantage for universities (Gallardo-Vazquez et al., 2020; Shek, 2019).

Participants' perceptions about their university's marketing and communication practices portrayed the efforts spent to share information/updates/news about the institution through online publications, long messages from the President, a couple of TV episodes highlighting the institution, and two volumes on the history of the institution, all of which included some content related to USR. They also cited the major branding study that was conducted end of 2019, which showed that the university *"is very highly thought of precisely because of its being socially engaged and student centered, which is part of our sense of social responsibility"*(EO6). In addition to occasional media interviews in daily TV shows and radio stations for student clubs featuring their collaboration and partnerships with governmental entities and the civil society within and beyond

university. Despite these achievements, executive officers claimed "*it doesn't mean that it has necessarily reached the populous"*(EO2), and questioned *"Is university here according it the attention deserved? I do not think so"*(EO4). Many respondents believed that USR hasn't been accorded proper attention, and the majority agreed that there is more room for improvement, so they generously suggested strategies they perceive effective at enhancing USR marketing and communication.

They advised first to educate stakeholders about USR and provide them with a clear understanding of the concept to help them appreciate its value and impacts, starting internally before addressing the external audience. They were also generous in sharing suggestions related to positioning, communication strategies, and the power of the brand. Some ideas encompassed identifying the points of differentiation and communicating them to the community, sharing more about USR related achievements. Other suggestions related to branding and building on success stories. Since branding relies on emotions and loving a brand is based on how relatable its actions are, the university should take advantage of the numerous impactful stories/initiatives, which serve the brand and its value, leading to the power of the brand and the pride of belonging. Testimonials and storytelling were also listed as *"a good way for promotion of USR*"(ALM3) and "*the best way to evoke empathy in students"*(FAC3). So, short videos evoking emotions like sharing a nostalgic memory about the university, or facts and startling statistics, these would captivate the audience. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of being more visual and creative. People nowadays have shorter attention spans and prefer shorter readings, hence the need for fun, direct, and appealing visuals on TV/social media.

And last, *"Publicity, advertisement, and marketing should be like the heart, it should be always beating"* (EO4). This is how an executive officer creatively described what is expected of the marketing and communication department, regular and continuous efforts invested in raising awareness and promoting USR.

Interviewees also shared their preferred means to receive USR related information and updates. The majority agreed on social media as one of the best ways "*to reach a wider audience in and outside of university"*(STD1), *"that's where the whole world is*"(FAC3). Another agreed upon medium by many students, alumni, and faculty was a website with *"an attractive image and a caption summarizing what the university is doing"*(STD6) or a microsite with everything related to USR "*centralized in one place"*(FAC1). And of course, the face-to-face or in-person

communication remains one of the most effective channels, regardless if the USR related news were communicated by faculty inside the classroom, or by student leaders who are university ambassadors able to convey powerful messages about the institution, or simply through the word-of-mouth, *"I just know from my environment, from people around me"*(ALM4) as per an alumnus. Very few respondents mentioned emails, most of the students were against it, *"definitely not emails because no one reads their emails anymore*"(STD3). Other sporadic answers cited a dedicated course, quarterly/yearly reports, documentaries/short videos/episodes highlighting the university's socially responsible acts and displayed on TV screens or laptop screens in the library.

Interestingly, a staff member argued for the establishment of a dedicated USR office as an effective way to communicate and promote USR, based on his personal experience with the benefits of having specialized units:

> *"When the central office I used to work for split into two units, each dedicated to one aspect of the work cycle, things became more efficient and we started doing things we could never imagined we could have done and achieved in terms of scope and quality of work"*(STF2).

Furthermore, the respondents emphasized the valuable role of faculty and relevant departments in promoting USR, which has been also denoted by Macfarlane and Barnett (2005), who considers 'service' to align with and fit within teaching and research as part of the academic staff role and duties. They believed that academic and non-academic departments can contribute substantially to instilling ethics and promoting a culture of social responsibility among the student body through various initiatives. Some examples included:

> *"A signature course on sustainability and the Engineering without borders initiative to develop engineers with high ethics and social responsibility", "the community component in the Nutrition curriculum through two courses with direct implications on society, a student club with events targeting the university community, in addition to fundraising for the Lebanese Food Banks, etc."*(FAC2).

They also mentioned the OCE and its simulation programs, through which around 40% of the students embarked on a social engagement experience:

> *"The impact is quite sizeable, so far 3 million hours, 20000 students across 250 schools in Lebanon, and then you have the Model United Nations,… such programs are valuable in terms of their impact on youth, hence on nation building. The snowball of positive effect has started to have its magical impact. This is how we create a culture of civic engagement"*(EO4).

Students and alumni also denoted faculty's 'soft power' and key role in USR promotion due to their proximity to students inside and outside the classroom. Even faculty themselves acknowledged

their influence and role in raising awareness and educating students to become socially responsible citizens and leaders, *"I feel it's my role to do that, you're opening their eyes... The mindset of social responsibility is an obligation on every educator"*(FAC3). Engaged staff can also impact students' social engagement by *"unconsciously injecting this passion into the students"*(STF1). It is worth noting that these testimonies reflected only engaged faculty's perceptions, understanding, and appreciation for their key role in developing students' citizenship and social responsibility through the learning process. Interestingly, all interviewed staff noted a sense of disengagement among faculty in general*, "Only few were really engaged, I guess because they were personally socially active, so I think it depends on the background and the personal experience, their personal objectives"*(STF1). They recommended promoting the culture of social responsibility not only among students, but also among staff and faculty. Yet, an executive officer argued that faculty engagement cannot be forced, it should be sincere and innate, *"as many faculty members have a natural sense of civic responsibility and ethics, it's not something that should be imposed"*(EO2), otherwise it becomes less genuine and ineffective.

5.13 Perceived Value of Promoting USR

Throughout the interviews, the majority of respondents passionately shared their experiences with social engagement, and elaborated on the wide scope of impact USR had on all involved parties including the university. Their statements and quotes clearly positioned USR as differentiator that leverages the university, in addition to its undoubtful contribution to increasing funds, boosting enrolment rates, and enhancing internal stakeholders' engagement, if promoted effectively.

5.13.1 Differentiator, Heightens Competitiveness

Alumni highlighted how their university *"outperformed, and by far, all other academic institutions in Lebanon"*(ALM5). They claimed that this social engagement is what *"makes all the difference"*(ALM2). Faculty added that USR feeds the power of the brand as it *"elevates non-consciously the perception of the university in people's brains"*(FAC3), so they develop a sense of pride for being associated with the institution and choose it unconsciously. While executive officers asserted, "*The meteoric rise of the university cannot really be explained without that passion that we have to serve society…The spirit that animates this institution is quite really distinctive"*(EO3). It is what differentiates the institution as *"the system becomes inimitable"*(EO4).

5.13.2 Increases External Funding Resources

Participants unanimously referred to the significant positive effect of USR on funding sources. They described it as a natural outcome for doing good to society. Quoting an executive officer, *"An institution that is serving society is worth sustaining…people are giving us… people have been really generous, very generous"*(EO3). Their affirmations were grounded in lived experiences and their quotes were self-expressive:

> *"When you see a university helping its students, alumni, community, and the country at large, whenever it holds a charity or fundraiser, people would give much more"*(STD4)

> *"Having people speak about the social responsibility of the university and the change it is doing in people 's life, that would give it the hype it needs for further funding"*(ALM4)

> *"The donor wants impact on society"*(FAC1)

> *"You gain broad recognition and become a potential recipient for donors and granting agencies and that is where money seeps in to really make programmatic changes… In our programs we receive funds from various agencies…and we are able to do what we are doing with an added value of financial self-sufficiency and surplus"*(EO2)

Some powerful examples included the Emergency Fund to expand the financial aid budget following the economic crisis, and the Mobile Clinic launched in the fight against COVID-19, which ended up being funded at zero cost for the university and its medical center. Both of these represented pure USR initiatives fully and generously supported by society. In addition to the OCE department and its success story, transforming from a small 'office' with a limited operating budget in 2010, into a self-sufficient department that *"runs a 60 million$+ grant called the University Scholarship Program",* and that is *"bringing in fresh dollars"* to the university at critical financial times.

Furthermore, participants pinpointed three factors essential to maximize the effects of USR on funding. First is the thorough planning of USR initiatives to attract the interest and support of a wider audience. Second is the accountability, credibility and transparency to build trust. In fact, the credibility inherited from having an affiliated hospital facilitated receiving donations, *"Following the Beirut blast on August 4, 2020, the university hospital received considerable international donations and funds for its service and support to the local community"*(EO5). Last is the publicity and aggressive promotion of the USR initiatives to the public, to attract donors who share the same vision and values of social responsibility.

5.13.3 Attracts Prospective Students

The majority of participants implied that USR positively affects prospective students, especially through financial aid, which is *"a crucial element for recruitment and enrolment"*(EO1) and attracts students to enrol. Then comes the *"rich and nurturing experience of civic engagement and simulation models of leadership building"*(EO4). Alumni and students who experienced it as high schoolers asserted the good reputation of these initiatives, which is attracting more high school students, as reiterated by executive officers, *"we have a high yield among those groups who join the university…It would be more attractive for high school students when they see there is a lot of active and engaged students"*(EO2). It appears that students are increasingly attracted by the institution's social engagement when making their choice of university, which has been affirmed in recent research by Plungpongpan et al. (2016) and Wigmore-Alvarez et al. (2020).

Nevertheless, a couple of interviewees shared views negating the direct impact of USR on students' choice of university. A faculty member believed that students would choose the socially responsible university only *"because they are sub-consciously directed toward that decision"*(FAC3). While an alumnus thinks, *"in Lebanon, we are far from reaching this level of choosing university for its USR, in the foreseeable future"*(ALM5). "*It is a differentiator, but not a main factor for the choice of university"*(EO5), added and executive officer.

It is worth noting that several participants tied the positive impact on prospective students to proper awareness and communication of USR, *"Before all of that happens, the idea of social responsibility needs to be clearly defined…Once stakeholders understand this, they will be inclined to enrol at a university…"*(STF2). USR might become an element to account for in the choice of university if it is well communicated to prospective students and their parents.

5.13.4 Enhances Current Students and Alumni Engagement

Many respondents highlighted a conditional impact of USR on students and alumni's engagement, an impact constrained by the level of awareness about the socially responsible opportunities that they can take part in:

> "*If I knew about it when I was an undergraduate, I would have been happy and proud to engage in such activities"*(ALM5).
>
> *"Knowing about it, I want to be more involved in all of these activities"*(STD3).
>
> *"Now that I know, I want to help them and become part of this"*(STD2).

Their quotes were self-explanatory and much reflective of need to better promote USR in order to solicit a greater engagement among internal community members.

5.14 Institutionalizing USR

The unanimously acknowledged value of committing to USR, practicing it, and promoting it adequately, provided a solid base for interviewers' recommendations to institutionalize USR through the establishment of a dedicated unit.

5.14.1 Establishing a USR Unit

A centralized USR office with a handpicked team and allocated resources will be the *"maestro who will orchestrate the work"*(EO1), synchronizing and synergizing USR efforts among all entities and across all functions. It will handle the planning, strategies design, execution, and promotion, in coordination with internal/external stakeholders to avoid wasted, redundant, or duplicated efforts, *"It's not only about establishing the office but about picking the right people, and of course the more centralized it is, the more dedicated it is, the better"*(STF2).

Interviewees expected it to increase internal stakeholders' awareness and engagement in the devised USR initiatives as well as to facilitate external stakeholders' reach out and collaboration on USR related activities. They will have a 'clear' reference point rather than having to contact multiple entities with overlapping authorities or conflicting interests. They added, when CSR is a bold component represented through a whole unit, this will serve the power of the brand, and will empower university representatives in their reach out to donors, granting agencies, and governmental or international organizations. Moreover, the USR related data will be centralized, which enables consolidating reports that serve various needs be it marketing or USR/sustainability reporting for ranking purposes especially that *"ranking institutions are heading toward including sustainability related components in their assessment and evaluation for institutions, which is why formalizing should be taken into consideration"*(EO3). They concluded that this USR unit will be a major differentiator of the university among others.

With the numerous supportive views, surged a 'discouraging' one expressed by an executive officer who warned that establishing a centralized USR unit might put off people in other entities and give them an excuse to engage less, pretending this is the sole responsibility of the USR unit, while it should be "*an all-consuming passion for the entire university, not a job for anyone"*(EO6). He

argued that the best it can be is *"a source for mobilizing, galvanizing, creating more momentum",* otherwise, being a substitute for others' efforts, it will be a *"wrong move"*.

5.14.2 Elements of a Successful USR Institutionalization

The discussions pointed out several vital elements for a successful USR institutionalization and maximized outcomes. The first one revolved around strategic planning and the importance of tying it to well devised coherent action plans. For instance, executive officers claimed that USR permeates the university strategic plan, yet the institution adopts a decentralized social engagement strategy according to which schools and entities (innovation center, student affairs, OCE, etc.) work separately instead of following a well-designed roadmap. Interestingly, one of the executive officers disagreed with the current decentralized USR strategy. He indicated that he had a previous experience working on CSR initiatives in a different role where he had to launch a strategic implementation of CSR, and to position it as a major component within that institution to be able to "*ask for and receive donations*" for his initiatives. His testimony conveyed the value of implementing USR in the strategic planning, for effective positioning leading to ultimate outcomes.

The second element related to leadership and its role in promoting and advancing USR within an institution. Executive officers emphasized the importance of the leader's belief in and passion for serving society. They added that USR cannot exist without the right leadership and the top management's conviction and support, otherwise little can be achieved:

> *"They have to believe that USR is an investment and not an expenditure. It could be a killer if they're not convinced of it, then nothing would really get started, and you cannot be semi-convinced of it, it has to permeate you"*(EO4).

The leadership can also determine the success or failure of USR implementation. For instance, the establishment of the OCE was a translation of the leadership values and passion for USR. This unit was forged from scratch, grew with hard work and strong belief in social service. Executive officers linked the success and exponential growth of the OCE to the unconditional support of the university decision makers and their encouragement against all odds. They also noted the importance of congruence in the relation with the leadership, the synergy, and shared values with the upper management for the actualization of any USR related initiatives.

The third element pinpointed by executive officers in particular was the institutional culture and climate, which either favours or discourages USR related efforts. They described the supportive and favourable climate within the institution that dedicated all its resources (classrooms, facilities, logistics, finances, etc.) to help the OCE unit expand its impact through *"an army of students"*

engaged and committed to make a difference in society. This confirms USR as an integral part of the institutional culture, *"it is part of our mental programming… a by-product of something that we do out of total conviction and as part of our culture"*(EO6). They also praised the reigning congruence, compliance, and enthusiasm toward executing the university mission, without any noticeable *"presence of dissonant voices"*(EO4).

Last is the university mission, which defines the principles that the institution goes by, guides the planning, and aligns the efforts toward the execution of USR initiatives/programs, which proves its vitality for USR implementation. With elements such as student-centeredness, formation of leaders, and civic engagement at its core, *"the university has honoured its mission statement in as much as creating a department called OCE for it to be able to carry the university from exclusively academic, exclusively research oriented, to be also serving society"*(EO4).

All of these factors can hinder the strategic implementation of USR and undermine the reaped outcomes. The absence of any of these elements−a highly committed leadership, a favourable climate with a culture of social engagement, and a representative mission−may challenge the strategic implementation of USR. Some given examples revolve around departments or decision makers having different agendas, prioritizing finances, rankings, or other issues over USR. And in some instances, the university culture and management strategies may unconsciously disrupt synergy and encourage competition rather than collaboration within the same institution, nurturing professional jealousy and over competitiveness. Another depicted challenge was buy-in from the top management down and institutional bureaucracy. According to an executive officer, even if a university's mission statement included commitment to volunteerism and building leaders, *"many universities don't have the offices, the capacity, they haven't set that as a real priority"*(EO2). Not working toward providing the needed resources, can be simply explained by the absence of commitment, belief, and buy-in from the top management:

> *"When you dare to put any letter in your mission statement, you'd better give it the means, putting the right person in the right position, the right encouragement, the action plan, the technical and human resources, for it to reach the right results"*(EO4).

In conclusion, this chapter revealed stakeholders' perceptions about the roles and challenges of the Lebanese private universities, among which the changing needs and growing expectations due to the national and global crises. It also shed light on stakeholders' understanding for the USR concept, its practices, and perceived importance based on its impact and the reported effects on the individual and organizational levels. The value of early USR education at school has been also

noted. USR must be associated with tailored marketing and communication efforts to maximize the social engagement outcomes for university. This can happen following a strategic implementation of USR across university, in fulfilment for the university mission, under the right leadership, in a favourable culture.

The next chapter will discuss the key findings derived from the twenty-five in-depth interviews conducted with participants representing diverse groups of stakeholders at the Lebanese American University. It will provide interpretations of the results to address the research questions of this study, in attempt to establish solid arguments for Lebanese private universities to engage in USR institutionalization, which is believed to help them overcome a multitude of major challenges, all at once.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

The rising local, regional, and global challenges have deeply affected universities and their stakeholders, expanding the latter's needs and pressuring institutions to address their heightened expectations in order to sustain and prevail in a highly competitive market. Grounded in Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (1983), this study strives to present USR as a multifaceted solution to many of the university challenges by leading to desired stakeholder and institutional related outcomes, namely stakeholders' satisfaction and loyalty, as well as enhanced image, trust, and competitiveness. USR will bring universities closer to their communities and will solicit society's unconditional support through funding and donations, among others, in return for the 'good' that the university has been engaged in spreading around.

This chapter will focus on interpreting the key findings generated from the twenty-five in-depth interviews in an attempt to answer the research questions by linking USR to enrolment and funding enhancement, and accordingly, establishing a strong rational for Lebanese private universities to invest in a strategic USR implementation. The discussion will revolve around the five main areas depicted through thematic analysis of the data collected. First, the perceived challenges facing the Lebanese private universities topped by stakeholders' growing needs, set a framework for the expected responses from these institutions. Second, stakeholders' understanding for the USR concept, its practices and perceived importance, portrayed it as a vital inherent element of universities' roles and missions, which can be capitalized on and expanded further. Third comes the role of marketing and communication strategies in addressing the lack/limited awareness about USR to maximize the outcomes. Fourth is the importance of early USR education at school, as part of raising awareness on social engagement. Last, the key elements for an effective implementation of USR will be discussed.

6.2 Challenges of the Lebanese Private Universities

6.2.1 Funding

Among the challenges identified by interviewees, funding was presented as an 'existential' issue for Lebanese private universities, notably after the economic crisis in the country starting October 2019, which left them shattered because of their full reliance on tuition fees and some fundraising, without any governmental funds. The currency depreciation by 90% has drastically reduced universities' income leaving them in huge deficit, unable neither to cover their operational costs,

nor to increase their tuitions as this will lead to considerable student drop outs for financial incapacity.

The funding issue, although acute in Lebanon, has been a global challenge for universities following the considerable decrease of HE governmental funding (Tilak, 2006), even in the most advanced countries (Brennan et al., 2004). Whenever available, public funding became conditional and performance-based (Williams, 1997; van Vught, 1997). This has increased competition among HEIs (Zusman, 2005) and led to a greater reliance on private resources such as tuition fees, gifts, and others (Liefner, 2003), hence the growing importance of recruitment and retention. For universities with partial or total dependence on private funding, other sources of income generation included industry collaborations in research and innovation, continuing education offerings (Bok, 2009), and satisfying consumerized students (Collini, 2017).

For Lebanese private universities, the large funds needed instantly for their survival, can be primarily secured through fundraising rather than increasing the tuition fees. But why would society safeguard a private university and what would encourage it to give considerable funds, especially to a well-established expensive institution?

Participants' testimonies affirmed that being a socially responsible institution, actively engaged in serving society and ensuring the wellbeing of its stakeholders is the answer. The exemplary community response to the Emergency Fund for students' financial aid and the COVID-19 Mobile Clinic campaigns, is an unarguable proof that USR is able to sensitize and mobilize the universities' host environment to reciprocate through supporting the institution in any possible means. Securing a record budget of nearly $100 million for Financial Aid supporting more than 85% of student body, and keeping the Mobile Clinic services alive for almost two years now, confirm the direct positive impact of USR on funding.

Moreover, based on the literature on HE as a private good, which is expressed through the change of funding patterns, Forest & Altbach (2007) contended that the direct beneficiaries are expected to sponsor higher education. Cremonini and Adamu (2020) added that, with the constrained public funding, the university stakeholders became a main source of funding.

Therefore, USR, which addresses all stakeholders' needs, will ensure 'consumerized' students' satisfaction, which positively affects tuition related incomes (Collini, 2017) through enhanced

recruitment and retention. It will also include society with the 'direct beneficiaries' who won't hesitate to sponsor universities. This answers the first research question investigating the impact of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement conclusively, and asserts a positive relationship among the three factors.

6.2.2 Rankings

Another challenge was the 'obsession' with rankings, which created unnecessary tension between the university management and academics, because the choice of university in such a small country is mainly linked to the programs offered and their affordability rather than the university rank. In fact, universities worldwide have been prioritizing ranking related agendas as it started affecting prospective students' choice of university (Bowman & Bastedo, 2009; Griffith & Rask, 2007), as well as universities' access to public funding based on research performance (Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012). According to Hazelkorn (2007), rankings have been stratifying institutions and increasing focus on research, which is widening the gap between 'world-class' universities and mass HE. Being ranked as an elite university became a sign of power and prestige (Hazelkorn, 2008) that feeds the university 'brand recognition' and valuation (Hazelkorn, 2007). As it became crucial to their reputation and viability (Farrell & Van der Werf, 2007), universities have been increasingly lured to play 'the rankings game', especially that most world university rankings adopt criteria such as the number of publications per faculty and the number of citations per paper without accounting for the societal relevance and impact of the research (Nejati et al., 2011).

In Lebanon, universities' leaders have been pushing academics to engage more in research that serves ranking metrics, sometimes at the expense of quality, impact, and faculty's interest in teaching or community service rather than in research, as reported by interviewed faculty. Obviously, this strategy has deeply affected them as they conveyed a sense of dissatisfaction and disengagement, being forced to focus on 'collecting points' for their promotion and professional advancement. This practice also conflicts with any potential USR related agenda and hinders its implementation. With university ranking topping the management priorities, efforts and resources will be channeled in this direction, especially that most ranking criteria focus on research and educational performances, with little attention to university's environmental footprints (Lukman et al., 2010) or social engagement that is core to the university mission (Federkeil et al., 2012).

Fortunately, some ranking agencies such as QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education started picking on 'impact' and 'sustainable development goals' in universities'

rankings. The QS Stars measures university's social responsibility in four areas including investment in community development, charity work and disaster relief, human capital development within the region, and environmental impact. While the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings evaluates universities commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The rise of similar rating systems will incentivize institutions to invest more resources in producing social impact by practicing and reporting social engagement, regardless of their intentions and motivations. Accordingly, the ranking agencies will be driving universities' behaviors on social engagement, defining what needs to be done in terms of USR and how it should be done to count toward their rankings. This would become problematic without a careful consideration of the indicators to assess what is considered a meaningful and impactful social engagement, because social impact cannot be always measured or translated into numbers. In addition, societal issues might differ from one nation/culture to the other, hence the importance of identifying local needs in USR planning. What if addressing those needs did not count toward the ranking indicators, will universities still engage in it?

As much as including USR in the ranking metrics seems encouraging for institutions to contribute to sustainable human development, it is tricky with the complexity of setting universally applicable metrics, when the socio-economic and political challenges/needs differ across continents. The interplay between doing what is right for the local community, and what serves the ranking will be defined according to the institution's driving values and agendas set by its leadership. And the latter has been recognized by interviewees as key for building a USR culture as the leaders inject their values within the institution. This was also reflected in the case of LAU, where many participants from different groups elaborated on the important role their institution's leadership played in creating a favourable environment and leading the USR efforts displayed toward both internal and external communities. Hence, the leadership and its values/beliefs will significantly impact the university's agendas and practices, which will determine the institution's level and scope of social engagement, aside from its commitment to improving its national and global rankings.

6.2.3 Stakeholders' Needs and Expectations

Lebanese universities have been also pressured to address the growing needs of their stakeholders as a result of the national economic/financial crises and the global pandemic, which expanded their expectations as reflected through the interviews. In regular conditions, with the fierce competition and the growing accountability in the HE industry, which imposed internal reforms (Brennan et al., 2004), universities cannot escape or overlook stakeholders' issues as these have been defining the

institutions' course of actions in their business-like approaches adopted to compete and prevail. What about special times of crisis where students, staff and faculty suffer accrued financial needs, and the society at large becomes incapacitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of access to basic needs?

LAU's attempts to respond to stakeholders' socio-economic needs in such extreme conditions is an explicit act of social responsibility. To name a few, the raised financial aid fund reaching close to $100 million, the relief packages to faculty and staff, the various initiatives launched against COVID-19 including the Mobile Clinic for PCR testing/vaccination, and a joint initiative between Engineering faculty and Lebanese industrialists to address the shortage of ventilators through local production. Adding to that, the School of Engineering proposal to the USAID-TIF (Trade Investment Facilitation project) to manufacture solar panels in Lebanon, which will solve a major national issue: electricity outage and unaffordable replacement solutions with the high cost of fuel and generators. These examples affirm the possibility of satisfying diverse needs of multiple stakeholders without evidence of conflict of interest among them, contrary to studies that noted it as result of investing in CSR (Barnett, 2007), in addition to the increased costs impeding maximal profits (Barnett, 2007; Friedman, 1970), and hampering organizational performance (Shen & Chang, 2009). The bold moves adopted by LAU, expressing its care for all its stakeholders brought it closer to society, unlocking its support evidenced through partnerships and considerable funds, boosting the university's competitiveness and survival.

Therefore, USR appears unarguably a multifaceted solution for the Lebanese private universities to address their challenges, satisfy their stakeholders' needs and expectations, gain public trust, and earn substantial funding without compromising their academic standards and integrity, or raising concerns around activities that can be associated with the commercialization of HE. The social engagement at LAU reaffirms that being a private institution relying exclusively on private funding sources, does not undermine the university's social engagement, similar to the Chilean universities' experience where privatization did not reduce their social contribution, in contradiction with the negative connotation between privatization and social engagement as in Brazil and Colombia (Bernasconi, 2005). A private university can and should be a socially responsible institution that exchanges support with its surrounding.

6.3. USR as a Hidden Opportunity to Overcome Universities' Challenges

Although the participants provided diverse understandings for the USR concept, they all agreed on it being a stakeholder-focused approach, revolving around identifying the university stakeholders' needs and finding sustainable solutions to their issues (Tetřevová & Sabolova, 2010). The key practices classified by the interviewees as socially responsible, be it the dedicated courses across programs, the research projects (the exoskeleton), the millions of dollars of financial aid, the mobile clinic, and the simulation models to name a few, have had a direct impact and a positive contribution to all involved parties. The reported transformational effects linked to USR practices corroborated the rising literature on USR and its impact on stakeholder- and organizational-related outcomes, namely student-university identification, loyalty (El-Kassar et al., 2019; Makki, 2018; Ogunmokun & Timur, 2019), and satisfaction (Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2020; Hsieh et al., 2019; Ismail & Shujaat, 2019; Mcowan, 2016; Vasilescu et al., 2010; Vázquez et al., 2015, 2016). It also leads to a greater employee commitment (Lo et al., 2017), and an enhanced university reputation (Lo et al., 2017; Ogunmokun & Timur, 2019; Vázquez et al., 2016), brand image (Plungpongpan et al., 2016) and corporate identity (Atakan & Eker, 2007). This expands the applicability of Stakeholder Theory to the HE industry, whereby universities that account for their stakeholders' best interest reap positive outcomes, all of which being valuable in a highly competitive educational market. These effects denoted in previous research and described by the participants portray USR as a competitive edge that distinguishes the socially responsible institution as *"the system becomes inimitable"(EO4),* according to an executive officer.

Moreover, stakeholders' testimonies reflected their perception of USR as a genuine translation of the universities' mission and roles in terms of contributing to the well-being and advancement of society at various levels, *"this is how the university can give back to society and it is expected nowadays to do so"*(STF2). This emphasis on the university's social obligations presents USR as part and parcel of, rather than an addition to the university missions of teaching and research, placing it at the heart of all its activities. Once again, this affirms USR as a mandate rather than a choice for universities (Plungpongpan et al., 2016; Slocum & Rhoads, 2009).

In fact, universities *"unlike companies, do no harm at all"* (alumni), and this is a key differentiator between USR and CSR. In the corporate field, the underlying motivation behind CSR is doubtfully public-serving (Du et al., 2010), due to the contradiction between the profit-seeking nature of businesses and the non-profit making nature of CSR (Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, it is believed that CSR has mostly a firm-serving motive such as compensating for a possible negative impact on

the host environment or an attempt to polish image and reputation. While for USR, the public-serving motive not only aligns with, but also stems from universities' roles, purpose, and missions. The revealed disparity between USR and CSR concurs with the research outcomes for Vallaeys (2007) and Ayala-Rodríguez et al. (2019). The former distinguished USR for its educational and cognitive impacts that do not apply for CSR in companies, while for the latter, student narratives about HEIs with USR established that CSR for a business is not similar for a university.

Furthermore, the perceived importance of USR relayed by key stakeholders who experienced it or witnessed its transformational impacts sheds light on the value of expanding the inherent base present in each institution to reap numerous 'low hanging fruits'. This study findings revealed that universities practice USR intuitively, driven by motivated socially responsible faculty, staff, students, and executive officers, who have it rooted in their hearts and values. For universities to maximize the USR related outcomes, they do not need extensive resources as is the case of CSR in the corporate field, where companies need human and financial resources dedicated to build a CSR unit from scratch. A mindful strategic planning and alignment of the existing human capital and resources can make USR more effective and multiply its outcomes.

Thus, universities must deploy social engagement efforts tailored around the struggles and challenges of their communities (Slocum & Rhoads, 2009) by understanding stakeholders' needs and managing the available resources efficiently. This presents USR as a hidden opportunity rather than an incurred cost for universities to address their multifaceted challenges successfully while gaining greater competitiveness.

6.4. USR Awareness, Marketing and Communication

The gap in stakeholders' awareness about USR, revealed through the interviews with the diverse groups of participants, confirmed the limited or lack of awareness reported in previous research on the USR concept and practices, which was claimed to affect stakeholders' engagement and participation in USR implementation (Ahmad, 2012; Leal Filho et al., 2019a; Pabian, 2019; Reichel et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of, not only strategizing and diversifying USR efforts across all university functions (Reichel et al., 2022), but also complementing it with well-designed internal and external marketing and communication strategies (Gomez et al., 2018) to maximize the impact of USR and its return on investment. Raising awareness on the value of USR and promoting the university efforts are key to shape stakeholders' perceptions about the university and increase their level of engagement and buy-in. This is essential for universities to gain societal

endorsement and support for their efforts toward expanding and growing the 'public good' that they are committed to achieving, and with which comes priceless benefits.

Adopting Stakeholder Theory as a conceptual framework based on which engaging in CSR generates positive outcomes, several studies on this issue highlighted the importance of customer awareness of the company's CSR in order to boost sales and customer loyalty (Sweeney, 2009). In fact, several studies revealed that customers lack awareness about the company's CSR initiatives (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Du et al., 2010). This is why corporate social disclosure or a proper communication of CSR efforts to stakeholders is crucial to increase the company's attractiveness to investors (Roberts et al., 2002) and to obtain financial benefits through increased sales and revenues (Sweeney, 2009). Raising stakeholders' awareness about deployed CSR efforts would enhance the company's value (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013) and maximize profits (Baron, 2001), which presents customer/stakeholder awareness as an essential element for the positive relationship between CSR and financial performance.

Similarly, in higher education, research indicated the presence of a gap in stakeholders' information on the university's socially responsible activities (Gomes et al., 2019; Pabian, 2019; Reichel et al., 2022). Hence the importance of USR disclosure and tailored communication strategies to improve stakeholders' awareness, boost their engagement (Cho, 2017; Gomes et al., 2019), and generate leads by promoting USR to potential students prior to choosing their university (Plungpongpan et al., 2016). These previous research findings conform with interviewees testimonies reflecting a greater level of engagement when coupled with more USR awareness, and positive effects on enrolment and funding enhancement with an efficient communication of all USR efforts.

Almost all universities today have dedicated marketing and public relations (MPR) units tasked for developing content and campaigns that serve the recruitment and fundraising efforts. These are usually guided by the strategic planning and leadership agendas. At LAU, interviewees acknowledged the MPR team's efforts, yet most of them agreed on a room for improvement with more USR focused content, by deploying tailored messages through relevant channels for each group of recipients, most importantly through social media, which is currently the most effective way to reach a wider internal and external audience. Isn't it *"where the whole world is*" today?*(FAC3).* Designing a more structured communication of USR initiatives was one of the findings and recommendations of a recent quantitative study by Reichel et al. (2022) surveying 1160 academic and administrative staff at one of the largest universities in central Poland. A wider

promotion will heighten not only the university's visibility, but also stakeholders' perceptions, in particular the reported credibility, trust, respect, image, reputation, appreciation, pride, loyalty and sense of belonging. This will translate into greater competitiveness, will attract prospective students, and will entice more funding through fundraising, which directly answers the first research question.

However, until USR is embedded in the strategic planning and explicitly highlighted by the leadership as a priority, the MPR will keep its current practices of communicating the socially responsible acts sporadically, according to their importance/impact, without allocating more resources and investing further efforts into raising awareness about USR, sharing its value, and actively promoting all aspects of the university's social responsibility (teaching, research, management, and extension activities) to society at large. USR needs to be institutionalized for it to bypass the conflicting agendas serving ranking and commercialization efforts.

In the event that USR is implemented in the strategic planning and prioritized by MPR, it might become problematic, which one drives the other: does USR drive the marketing or vice versa? At first, it might seem an equally bi-directional relationship. USR offers a rich substance for the MPR to cover, and the latter provides exposure and promotion for the USR to help expand its impact and gain the needed hype for wider buy-in. It is evident that MPR is a crucial element of the USR lifecycle to maximize the outcomes. This has been proven by the awareness exercise and testimonies asserting that knowing more about USR solicits heightens interaction, engagement, and support from the community. As regular press coverages create an impression that the institution is doing a lot and outperforming others, this builds a greater image and secures a stronger market position to attract prospective students, qualified faculty and staff, and larger funds. Here appears a concern that the desire to create a positive image starts driving the USR agenda instead of the 'good will' and desire to produce social impact for the sake of it, letting what comes with it be a 'leveraging bonus'.

Actually, it is less likely that the 'MPR driving USR' scenario happens in universities. The interviews revealed that USR is perceived to be innate, rooted in the institution's mission and roles. It is also perceived by some participants as an obligation on academics supporting and reinforcing the missions of teaching and research. Even when it is not implemented strategically, it is intuitively embedded in most university practices, and the MPR's role is just to make it more visible to the public. However, MPR is more likely to drive CSR in the corporate field, where it is not an

instinctive element of the firm's mission, role or purpose as in university, but rather an addition to the goals with incurred costs. The company will be planning its socially responsible acts 'from scratch' with the main goal of earning a better image and reputation instead of genuinely serving a cause, which constitutes an additional differentiator between USR and CSR.

6.5 Early Education on USR

Many students' and executive officers' testimonies affirmed the value of educating middle and high school students about USR. A couple of students who were offered opportunities for civic engagement at their schools reported developing volunteerism early on, before joining university. While alumni who were socially engaged during their college years, and currently enrolled students who have been working with middle/ high school students through various civic engagement and leadership programs developed by the OCE unit, described the deep transformation they witnessed on themselves and the involved students. According to an executive officer, the participation of middle/high school students in MUN and other simulation programs for example, is crucial for their transformation into leaders with deep interest in serving society and giving back.

These narratives align with the outcomes of the sparse studies on youth volunteerism, which assert the positive impact of adolescents' civic engagement on both academic and social levels (Moore & Allen, 1996), and reveal that school-based students' activism is positively linked to future community service (Jennings 2002; Stewart et al., 1998), as well as increased intentions for volunteerism after graduation from high school (Metz & Youniss, 2003). This conforms with Oesterle et al.'s (2004) findings claiming that youth volunteerism continues through the transition to adulthood, which emphasizes the value of service learning programs in schools.

6.6. Institutionalization of USR

The findings of this study reinforced the shared value of committing to USR (Gomez, 2014; Sharma & Sharma, 2019), practicing it mindfully, and communicating it adequately (Reichel et al., 2022) for it to become a leverage over other institutions. This provided a strong rational for participants' recommendations to establish a dedicated USR unit that handles the strategic planning, organization, and reporting of all USR related initiatives while aligning and synergizing the relevant efforts of various contributors across different entities and departments.

The results also signaled essential interrelated elements for a successful USR implementation. First is a highly committed leadership, which believes in, and values social responsibility enough to

prioritize it and support it by all means. Second is a favourable climate with a culture of social engagement, which is a given with the leadership buy-in. Third is a representative mission that guides the university actions to project USR under the proper leadership, within a favorable organizational culture. Otherwise, the strategic implementation of USR will be easily hindered by the conflicting agendas and lack of support.

The participants' narratives showed that LAU exhibited numerous socially responsible initiatives, programs, and activities in its diverse functions, many of which being practiced intuitively and conducted to address imminent needs, which reduced their impact as evidenced by interviewees' limited knowledge about some initiatives. A structured approach to USR implementation following the typology developed in chapter three, which consists of having USR reflected in the university mission and embedded in the main goals of the university's strategic planning, will facilitate injecting it across all university functions:

1) In the curriculum and different programs through a mandatory course or project.
2) In research encouraging studies targeted to solving societal problems or any pressing needs of the hosting environment.
3) In extracurricular activities, although it's an intuitive practice by different entities through student clubs and departmental initiatives, yet these can be aligned and better supported.
4) In management practices (green practices, environment friendly, recycling, etc.).

For this purpose, a diagram (Figure 2) has been designed to represent the structure of a model for USR institutionalization, translating the needed actions for its actualization:

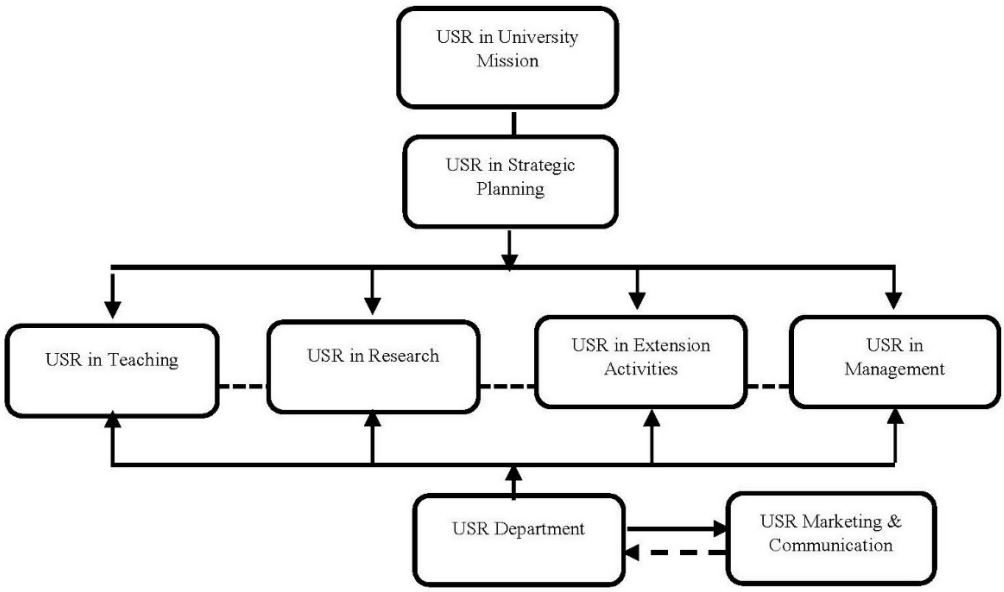


Figure 2. Diagram representing USR institutionalization model

According to this model, to transition from intuitive USR practices to the institutionalization of USR, it should be implemented strategically in each aspect and function. This can be achieved by founding a USR unit responsible from planning to execution, mobilizing and synchronizing the efforts of engaged academic and non-academic staff as well as students from all entities, because the inherent base of USR is built on the genuine contributions of those members who value social engagement. The USR unit will also handle relevant data collection for effective reporting not only to allow measuring success and identifying room for improvement, but also for ranking related to sustainability and social responsibility. This information can also be used for promotion in close collaboration with the marketing and communication team. Regardless of the adopted approach, most importantly for the socially responsible university is to create a space for a two-way dialogue with the community, where the needs can be met by the knowledge and experience through a partnership with mutual benefits.

However, USR institutionalization– as any organizational change– can be challenging. The leadership belief in USR, buy-in, and support, is essential to drive a cultural change and motivate stakeholders to engage more meaningfully. The implementation barriers can be eased by raising awareness about USR through active learning, trainings and workshops, a reward system for engaged faculty and staff, among others (Makki & El-Kassar, 2021).

To conclude, the findings generated from the in-depth interviews addressed the research questions, asserting a positive relationship among USR, enrolment, and funding enhancement, which confirms the value of a strategic USR implementation to help universities overcome their multifaceted challenges while satisfying their stakeholders. The outcomes can be maximized when coupled with tailored marketing and communication strategies to raise awareness about USR and increase community's engagement. This will grant the university valuable competitive advantages to ensure its survival at times of crises, and its growth in normal circumstances, which provides a strong rational for private universities to invest in institutionalizing USR.

The next chapter will provide a summary about the research findings and how they addressed the research questions. It will also depict the research contributions to theory and practice, then will highlight the limitations of the study, and provide some directions for future research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

7.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study conducted at a Lebanese private university that exhibited bold moves in supporting its internal stakeholders and society at large facing unusual health and socio-economic crises, is to establish a solid argument for a policy-driven, or at least a voluntary USR institutionalization. The findings showed that being socially responsible by addressing societal issues of any kind and contributing to the welfare of a community in dire need for support, would help private universities get large funds in the form of donations and heighten support from society, which ensures their sustainability even in trying times. This emphasizes the role of universities, which goes beyond educating the youth for a better future (Altbach, 2008). USR, which is implied and practiced intuitively across most institutions, constitutes a hidden opportunity for private universities to solicit increased financial contributions from donors, ensuring institutions' viability. Therefore, according to this study, implementing USR strategically across university functions, raising awareness about it, and communicating it effectively to society at large, are believed to attract those sharing common values, who are always willing to lend a hand to make the world a better place. Hence, an increased funding and heightened support to the university, which ensures its sustainability, even in trying times.

This concluding chapter will provide a summary about the key findings and how they address each of the research questions. Also, it will highlight its contributions to theory and practice. Then, it will discuss the limitations and offer some directions for future research.

7.2 Summary of the Study and Key Findings

USR has become a more pressing issue with the rising global challenges, of which the COVID-19 pandemic that deeply impacted different aspects of everyone's life, needs, and expectations. With the rise of this global crisis, universities' responsibilities intensified and their social mission expanded far beyond building future leaders, to address the pressing needs of local communities. With the abrupt shift to online teaching, these institutions were expected to ensure continuity and to sustain the quality of education, regardless of their readiness and the availability of adequate resources. Internal stakeholders' needs for accommodation and support, technically and financially, heightened the burdens created by society's expectations to contribute to the fight against the

pandemic, and to finding solutions for its repercussions. Yet, universities worldwide exhibited different levels of contributions, as some institutions lacked adaptability and responsiveness at this critical time.

In the context of this research study, private universities in Lebanon have been facing compounded challenges, as the country was concurrently going through one of the most severe economic crises worldwide. They found themselves instantaneously lacking even the minimal funds to survive, yet still accountable to respond to the exponentially rising financial needs of their internal stakeholders– a contribution and support that are usually funded from a surplus, in normal circumstances. In addition to the national and global crises, these institutions have been challenged by advancing their rankings to overcome local and regional competition, as this will impact their enrolment yields, hence their revenues from tuition fees. With all of this ongoing in the absence of any governmental role or contribution.

This study aimed to identify a strong rationale for Lebanese private universities to engage in a strategic implementation of USR across their key functions, as a solution to the multifaceted challenges they have been enduring in a space of uncertainty and sparse resources. For this purpose, a qualitative study was conducted with data collected from twenty-five semi-structured in-depth interviews, with participants representing diverse groups of university stakeholders including students, alumni, staff, faculty, and executive officers at the Lebanese American University. The choice of this specific institution stemmed from its accessibility– being a staff member at the beginning of this project, and its relevance, as an institution that exhibited bold socially responsible moves in support of its community at times of crises. The generated findings served well the purpose of this study in addressing the research questions as follows:

RQ1: *Why would Lebanese private universities invest in USR implementation?*

This research provided various undeniable arguments confirming the value of a strategic USR implementation as an opportunity for universities to overcome their multifaceted challenges, in particular funding, which has been a long-standing challenge for universities worldwide, as they increasingly rely on self-generated income with the constrained public funding. It showed that practicing USR will bring universities closer to their communities, ensuring their diverse needs and expectations are met, which bridges the widening gap resulting from universities' 'obsessive' focus on rankings and accreditations to overcome competition. USR will also boost universities' competitiveness, which is much needed in a challenging market. Moreover, to launch a USR

institutionalization, universities require minimal resources as they can build on the inherent base portrayed by the participants through the plethora of socially responsible programs and initiatives, practiced intuitively and sporadically. All they need is to reassess and optimize the use of their current resources, align and synergize the USR efforts across teaching, research, extension activities, and management, as well as invest in strategic marketing and communication campaigns to raise awareness about USR, and increase the internal and external communities' engagement. In brief, this research presents USR as an ultimate solution for major university challenges, all at once.

RQ2: *How does USR impact enrolment and funding?*

Participants' testimonies asserted a positive impact of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement. Being a socially responsible university will attract prospective students, especially through financial aid packages, and through the enhanced reputation of the institution, which is known to affect students' choice of university (Brown, 2015). This will increase enrolment yields, hence tuition fees' income. Moreover, USR will grant the university respect, trust, and credibility, which will drive the community's support for the institution and its socially responsible initiatives directed toward stakeholders and society at large. It will facilitate the flow of funds in the form of donations, which was described by the participants as a 'natural' outcome for doing good to society. Therefore, USR is an essential element to positively impact enrolment and funding.

RQ3: *What could be other effects/consequences of USR practices?*

In addition to enhancing enrolment and funding, the interviews reported experienced and evidenced impactful effects on the individual and institutional levels, as well as on individuals' relationship with the institution, which affirm the value of USR. These encompassed a major transformation of all engaged individuals, as the participants reported growth, development of self-esteem, advancement of social skills, expansion of networks, and change in their values and priorities, among others, which are takeaways that transform their personal and professional lives after graduation. On the institutional level, participants' testimonies conveyed a better perception of the university with enhanced visibility, respect, and trust in the socially responsible institution, which nurtures its brand image and reputation. They even portrayed a positive impact on their relationship with the university, as they exhibited greater appreciation, pride, sense of belonging, and loyalty.

RQ4: *What is the role of awareness and value sharing in the USR context?*

The limited or lack of awareness about USR depicted through the interviews, and the change in perceptions following the exercise designed to quantify participants' awareness about USR,

highlight the vital role of USR awareness and communication. Participants' feedback asserted that promoting USR through well devised and tailored communication strategies, is essential to raise awareness about USR, share its value, and heighten the community's engagement and support. They portrayed it as a conditional factor to achieve ultimate outcomes, such as enrolment and funding enhancement.

RQ5: *How can USR drive universities' response to emerging challenges?*

The findings provided a clear testimony that USR represents a unique opportunity to address universities' multilayered challenges. Despite universities' extreme pressures depicted by the participants, the study showed that the institution, which has been deeply engaged within its territory, and has taken a stakeholder-oriented approach, accounting for their needs and addressing their challenges to the best of its ability prior and post-pandemic, will come distinct post-crises, with the growing visibility, image, and reputation ensuing from this social engagement. The built trust and rooted relationship with the community, which were conveyed through the testimonies, will bring long term gains and ensure the university's sustainability. Based on their personal experiences, the participants affirmed the positive impact of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement. This will facilitate the flow of funds and financial support for private universities that exhibit social responsibility and contribute to the welfare of society, which addresses a major global challenge, funding. Moreover, USR, by definition is a stakeholder-oriented concept. Therefore, building USR strategies based on the identified stakeholders' needs and expectations ensures their satisfaction. It also reduces the gap between universities and their communities, ensuing from institutions' focus on enhancing their rankings and competitiveness, as the latter becomes a natural outcome for a socially responsible university.

The findings of this study provided a solid argument for USR implementation at Lebanese private universities, especially that the respondents' stories and shared examples were a clear testimony that universities do practice USR intuitively, they just need to expand it strategically across all functions. This research represents a calling for universities to institutionalize USR, build on the inherent base, and purposefully direct the available financial and human capital resources, to offer meaningful contributions to local communities. By placing USR at the heart of the institution and embedding it into all university functions, only then, overcoming university challenges will be one among many more benefits to reap!

7.3 Theoretical Implications

The following sub-sections will highlight the contributions of this study to the body of literature on universities' social engagement in general, and the literature on USR in particular, as well as to the Stakeholder Theory.

7.3.1 Literature on Universities' Social Engagement

An extensive review of the literature on universities' social engagement across centuries revealed a multitude of concepts revolving around universities' interaction with the various constituents of society through one or more of their missions of teaching, research, and the third mission on university's socio-economic and cultural contribution to local communities. These notions encompass the land-grant university, civic university, scholarship of engagement, regional innovation systems, triple helix, new knowledge production Mode 2, entrepreneurial university, anchor institution, stewardship of place, and USR. These concepts, which represent various forms of universities' engagement with their surroundings, appear as an adapted response to the emerging local and global challenges affecting universities' operations at a specific time. Despite some variations in their description, their practices, breadth of coverage, or focus areas, they all agree on the vital role of university as a local/regional asset that drives innovation and economic development, and contributes to the society's welfare. They concur on the university as a change maker through creating relevant knowledge and leading regional development.

Moreover, the literature on USR introduced it a couple of decades ago as a new concept, in some instances comparable to CSR in universities. However, a thorough consideration of the literature on HE encompassing universities' roles, social impact, and contribution to local/regional communities' advancement, reveals that USR is just another notion among many others, which represent universities' social engagement across centuries. It reaffirms that social engagement is a 'natural' component of universities' purpose, roles and mission to advance society and achieve a sustainable human development. As most universities appear to have an inherent base of socially responsible initiatives and activities practiced intuitively by different members of its internal community, this draws connected lines between university's social engagement and USR, bridging the gap between both literatures previously presented as 'old' and 'new' literature, linking them in an integrated approach.

7.3.2 USR Literature

First, this study adds to the literature a newly affirmed positive relationship among USR, enrolment, and funding enhancement, which wasn't examined in previous USR studies. Most of the research

on USR over the past two decades revolved around defining this concept and highlighting its importance, as it addresses societal needs toward achieving sustainable development. Researchers presented various models of USR translating their understanding of this concept. They also conducted numerous studies, which linked USR to various stakeholder-related outcomes, such as student satisfaction, loyalty, and identification, as well as institutional-related outcomes, including but not limited to image, reputation, identity, and competitive advantage. However, research on the impact of USR implementation in developing countries is still scarce (Ali et al., 2021), and the impact of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement has not been investigated yet, despite its relevance and timeliness. Considering the global decline of HE public funding (Tilak, 2006) and the heightened financial strains imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, universities have been carried away from their main roles in their search for additional sources of funding. Validating a relationship between USR and funding enhancement will help bring universities back on track, to focus on their contributions to their communities without jeopardizing their resources, as their social responsibility will be rewarded with increased support and funding from society. Grounded in the Stakeholder Theory, this research findings introduce USR as an antecedent for university funding, in a conceptual model not previously established in the USR literature, linking USR to funding, with awareness as a moderator to this relationship.

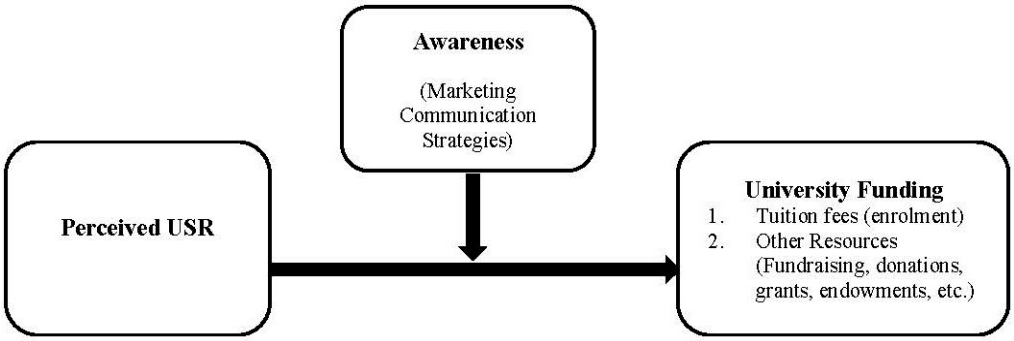


Figure 3. Conceptual model linking USR to funding, moderated by awareness

The conceptual model in figure 3 seems practically plausible and sound according to the study findings, being built on a deep understanding of various stakeholders' perceptions, awareness, and engagement in USR.

Second, the findings of this qualitative study revealed a substantial differentiation between USR and CSR (Ayala-Rodriguez et al., 2019; Vallaeys (2007), the least being the motivation behind each of them, the levels of investment needed, and the role of marketing. USR naturally aligns with

the roles, purposes, and missions of universities. Even without a formal institutionalization, USR is practiced intuitively across one or more of the university mandates of teaching, research, and third mission. While in the corporate field, CSR is purposefully launched and applied strategically, in most cases to compensate for a harm caused by the business operations or to polish the company's image and reputation. This requires considerable human capital and financial resources, not required for universities, enjoying an intrinsic base for social responsibility, which they can build upon and grow further by optimizing the use of available resources. Not to mention businesses' heavy reliance on marketing campaigns to promote their CSR initiatives, which is far from applying to universities, despite its importance. In the corporate field, it is mostly the marketing goals that drive CSR planning and implementation, while in universities, it is less likely that the marketing goals define USR agendas. With USR being 'innate' and rooted in the institution's mission and roles, it is the one driving the relationship with the marketing and communication, providing a rich content for promotion and visibility.

Third, this research adds to the existing literature on USR through its different and unique context. This study was conducted in Lebanon during exceptionally challenging times, marked by the most severe economic and financial crisis in the history of the country, which depleted the national resources, and led to currency devaluation by 80%, three-digit inflation rate, skyrocketing poverty and unemployment, with shortage in essential services. This national crisis was compounded by the global COVID-19 pandemic and its known repercussions. Adding to the unique national context, the particularity of the Lebanese higher education system that is dominated by private universities versus a single public university. This ecosystem is characterized by a loose governance structure, absence of national strategies and quality assurance standards, with the lack of any governmental funding or support for private universities. In the literature on USR, a considerable number of studies were led in countries where public and/or private universities enjoy significant state funding and support. Examples include but not limited to: China and India where universities are managed by the state; Spain, Mexico, Malaysia, United States, Turkey, and Finland where the majority of students go to public universities; Estonia and the United Kingdom where public universities host the large majority of students (Singh, 2014). Therefore, conducting this research in the Lebanese context, within private universities that rely solely on self-generated funds without any governmental support, during critical times marked by national and global crises, this unique and extremely challenging environment offers more value to the findings. If USR practiced intuitively at a Lebanese private university with less than minimal resources, can positively impact enrolment and funding enhancement, in addition to individual and institutional gains while making

considerable societal contributions by alleviating the effects of the crises, then what could USR practiced strategically at a university with more resources, in a stable country with better conditions, bring in to the institution, its stakeholders, and society at large?

7.3.3 Stakeholder Theory

This research extended the application of Stakeholder Theory to the HE industry, based on a qualitative approach rather than the commonly used quantitative deductive methods in examining the impact of USR on stakeholder- and organizational-related outcomes. It revealed that by practicing USR, universities will be addressing their internal stakeholders needs and expectations, which will yield valuable desirable outcomes on the individual and organizational levels, as well as on the individuals' relationship with the institution, as evidenced by the interviews.

This study is also a genuine representation of the normative aspect at the heart of the Stakeholder Theory, which is much overlooked as the various business disciplines focus on the instrumental value of this organizational management theory, instead of the combination of both aspects (Bowie, 2012). Moreover, it reinforces Freeman et al.'s (2010) view of CSR as a strategic element of the business value creation, rather than its common conceptualization as an add-on activity undertaken by businesses out of moral obligation to give back to society, after making financial profits. In the case of universities, USR appears more of a part and parcel of the institution's 'business', not a surplus to be added, which is also a key differentiator between USR and CSR. Furthermore, the outcomes confirm how the interests of all groups can be balanced according to the Stakeholder Theory. Through USR, universities can create value for all involved stakeholders including themselves, without the need for "trade-offs" (Freeman et al., 2010) or prioritization of a group over others, especially when USR is planned based on the needs identified in the host environment.

7.4 Practical Implications

This research was initially inspired by personal experiences, working at a Lebanese private university for thirteen years, in multiple roles that provided daily interactions and direct communication with various internal stakeholders including students, alumni, faculty, and staff, and occasionally executive officers. This constituted a unique opportunity to witness, not only the university's wide scope of impact on its surrounding, and the possibilities for more meaningful contributions to both internal and external communities, but also the shifting agendas toward advancing the university rankings and searching for additional sources of income generation. These observations and lived experiences nurtured the interest in the research topic, and motivated

conducting this study, in an attempt to contribute to practice by shedding light on the possibilities for universities to serve their communities while serving their own interests. The practical implications cover various levels as follows:

7.4.1 Universities

The findings represent a strong calling for universities to consider USR institutionalization in their look out for new opportunities to increase their funding. The example of LAU, which exhibited bold moves supporting its internal stakeholders and society in times of crises, and received generous donations and exemplary response from local and international parties (individuals and organizations)−represents a success story. It shows that a university can contribute to its host environment even in challenging times with limited resources; practicing USR doesn't necessarily create a financial burden. Furthermore, despite being a private institution relying mainly on tuition fees, yet people donated considerable amounts reaching several millions of USD in return for the university's social responsibility.

Being socially responsible will contribute to solving, not only universities' financial will contribute to solving, not only their financial resources' issues, but also other major challenges related to competition, as well as to fulfilling stakeholders' needs and expectations. By embedding USR into their culture and day-to-day practices, engaged Lebanese universities will become a benchmark for other HEIs, creating value for society, and playing a vital role in safeguarding the collapsing country. A strategic management of resources, together with proper awareness and customized communication strategies, will allow these institutions to distinguish themselves and acquire strong competitiveness in a highly challenging ecosystem. They will also gain a greater regional/global competitiveness, as many international ranking agencies added a social responsibility/ sustainability related component to measure universities' social impact. This presents USR as a low-cost hidden opportunity for Lebanese private universities to overcome their challenges and ensure considerable gains while playing their roles to the fullest.

7.4.2 University Managers

The results contribute to strengthening managerial commitment to USR, and facilitate winning the decision makers' support, which is vital for a successful USR institutionalization that ensures synergy among the three missions of the university. The established direct positive relationship between USR and funding equips university managers with solid arguments to justify the investment of available human capital and financial resources in implementing USR initiatives.

The findings will guide their efforts and effective use of resources as they design awareness campaigns and develop USR programs built on a deep understanding of stakeholders' needs and expectations. Complementing these efforts with tailored communication strategies promoting USR, will optimize the outcomes, entice greater engagement among internal and external stakeholders, and lead to a cultural transformation. Furthermore, establishing a system for USR reporting, not only feeds the promotional efforts, but also allows benchmarking and comparison among universities, supporting recruitment efforts as it makes it easier for prospective students to make their choice of university.

7.4.3 Academic and Non-Academic Departments

The testimonials of different groups of respondents highlighted the value of educating students and teaching them how to become socially responsible inside and outside the classroom, which will transfer with them as they transition into adulthood (Oesterle et al., 2004). Through relevant courses in the curriculum and academic projects, university students will get to understand the concept of social responsibility, and through volunteering/civic engagement opportunities as part of the campus life, they will experience it first hand and witness the scope of its impact. Several interviewees noted that many students struggle when first introduced to USR at university, especially when it is imposed through a mandatory course for a degree, or a project to fulfil a scholarship requirement. They find themselves obliged to 'do good', which does not interest them or mean anything to them. But with time and further engagement, they get used– and even 'addicted'–to it as they start enjoying the feelings, the sense of fulfilment, and the rewarding impact on themselves and all concerned stakeholders. This is how the university can engrain USR in each and every student, creating a legacy that carries on forever and a long-lasting effect that becomes a key takeaway after graduation.

7.4.4 Middle & High Schools

The results of this research study shed light on the importance of USR education early on, in middle and high school, in alignment with the research outcomes affirming the positive effect of civic engagement on the academic and social levels (Moore & Allen, 1996). Several participants who had the chance to experience social engagement at school or witnessed middle/ high school students taking part in the simulation programs, all of them insisted on the value of USR education in schools (Oesterle et al., 2004). When learned early, volunteerism tends to continue after graduation (Metz & Youniss, 2003). At a younger age, students are more open to developing a sense of volunteerism, care for others and society, and interest in giving back (Jennings, 2002). Since this is not common

at schools in Lebanon, it is expected that the socially responsible universities develop initiatives in partnership with schools, as part of their efforts to raise awareness about social engagement and promote an early USR education, so when students join university, they can contribute more meaningfully to the USR efforts.

7.4.5 Policy Makers

The outcomes of this research are expected to encourage HE policy makers to support the development of policies/regulations that promote and endorse universities' social engagement, which impact expands far beyond the development of local and regional communities, as evidenced by the example of LAU and the major impact it had on key stakeholders and society at large during challenging times. With this study presenting USR as key component, which ensures valuable desirable outcomes for all involved stakeholders including universities' themselves, policy makers are called upon to encourage fostering a better social engagement by universities through policies and national strategies.

In Lebanon, as the state's role has been limited to licensing institutions rather than overseeing the HE landscape, ensuring quality education and supporting the growth of universities, which will translate into further social and economic development of the country, USR related policies appear to be far from actualization in the near future.

7.4.6 University Partners

An effective marketing and communication of the USR efforts based on the reported figures/achievements, will attract external stakeholders from the public and private sectors, locally, regionally, and internationally to build partnerships and establish fruitful collaborations. Their high regard for engaged universities, which have gained trust, great reputation, and attractiveness, will translate into significant funding and investments, much needed by private universities partially or fully unsupported by the state.

7.5 Limitations

This research has several limitations mainly related to the research context, methods, and sample size which affect generalizability, in addition to time constraints.

7.5.1 Sample Size

This study was based on the analysis of twenty-five semi-structured interviews conducted with participants representing diverse groups of internal university stakeholders. This number, which

was deeply impacted by the pandemic and recurrent lockdowns, might seem non-compliant with the 'saturation theory', however, the richness and the depth of the collected data, compensated for the limited number of interviews.

7.5.2 Research Methods

Although the qualitative approach ensures a richness of knowledge, it comes sometimes at the expense of representativeness (Kuzel, 1999). Complementing this study with a quantitative analysis of data collected from various Lebanese private universities, with a large sample, and integrating the results with the findings of the qualitative analysis through a mixed methods approach would have enabled generalizability and transferability of the findings, providing a wider and deeper scope with reinforced 'analytic power' (Sandelowski, 2000).

In fact, this study was intended to be a larger research project adopting an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, which allows a detailed view and better interpretations of the complex relationships between universities and their stakeholders. The first qualitative phase to develop a theoretical concept based on the data collected through the interviews, should have been followed by the development of an instrument, to be used in a subsequent quantitative deductive phase, with a large sample from at least ten Lebanese private universities to be able to generalize the findings. However, the COVID-19 pandemic with consecutive lockdowns led to considerable delays in interviews, some being postponed multiple times over several months. Shifting to online interviewing was also challenged by the poor quality/ absence of internet connection, which all caused constraints to the research timeline. Not to mention the economic turmoil in the country; everyone became consumed by securing the basic needs of food, medication, fuel, electricity and others, as these were hardly accessible. This has deeply affected people's openness and receptiveness to engage in research studies, and limited the number of interviews to twenty-five. However, the richness, breadth, and depth of the findings generated from the conducted interviews, exceeded expectations and compensated for the compulsory change of the research methods.

7.5.3 Generalizability

This study was undertaken in a single private university in Lebanon based on data collected from twenty-five in-depth interviews. Including other private universities in addition to the only public university, would have provided more inclusive and conclusive findings representing the whole sector in Lebanon, through a larger sample size. In fact, the exponentially soaring economic situation in Lebanon had devastating effects on all private universities, as they became totally

consumed by the crises and far from being responsive or from engaging in new projects. Hopefully this research project can be expanded further to include at least the top ten private universities as the economic and financial distress start to ease. As for the single public university in Lebanon, it is and will remain inaccessible because its geographical distribution across the country is closely tied to political affiliations reigning over the segregated campuses, not to mention the lack of finances and resources, even before the crises, which is just a reflection of the status of all governmental institutions in a bankrupt country. The meagre resources of the public university will impact not only the quality of education, but also the quality of services provided, where it is less likely to identify USR related activities or programs.

7.5.4 Time Constraints

The COVID-19 safety measures and lockdowns impacted the qualitative data collection stage in terms of frequency and number of interviews, many of which were postponed several times, and were delayed by a month or more sometimes. This compelled a very slow pace of data collection and a smaller number of interviews within the allocated time for the study.

7.6 Future Research

The literature on USR can benefit from a complementary quantitative analysis based on a large sample population with data collected from multiple Lebanese private universities to validate the developed conceptual model, which posits a positive relationship between USR and funding, statistically, for the generalizability of the findings. It is also worth exploring factors other than awareness, which moderate the relationship between USR and funding, to account for in devising and executing USR strategies, in order to maximize the return on university's engagement.

Moreover, conducting this study at different size/type of universities (small or large; public or partially/fully supported by the state) would be interesting to identify any potential disparities related to the size of the institution and its financial resources, or its motivation and level of engagement with the community, among other factors. Also, examining the impact of USR on enrolment and funding enhancement in different contexts such as developing countries versus developed countries, through cross-cultural studies, would allow noting any possible variations due to cultural disparities or other factors.

Furthermore, future research may consider case studies examining the process of USR institutionalization at a selected university, depicting the strategies adopted, the challenges faced

and how they were addressed, the measurement of USR, the marketing and communication strategies, and the earned outcomes at various level. This would enrich the USR literature with more technical details guiding the process of USR implementation.

Last, a new direction for USR research can explore social responsibility in middle and high schools, as this study provided interesting insights about the importance of early USR education. Further efforts can be invested in building a culture of social engagement among the young generation, which once acquired, will accompany them forever.

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Appendix A

Consent to Participate in an Interview

Impact of University Social Responsibility on Enrollment and Funding Enhancement: A National Student Perspective from Lebanese Private Universities

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project through an interview. I am a doctoral student at Northumbria University in UK and I am completing this research project as part of my requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration. The purpose of this study is to highlight the value of implementing university social responsibility (USR) across all functions of the Lebanese private universities by linking it to enrollment and funding resources. It intends to examine students' perception of USR, its impact on enrollment and funding, as well as the effect of awareness and value sharing of the socially responsible initiatives undertaken by universities.

There are no known risks, harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life. The information you provide will be used to set a strong rationale for universities to initiate a strategic implementation of university social responsibility, creating value for themselves and the society. You will not directly benefit from participation in this study. The study will involve 20 to 30 participants. The interview will take around 30 minutes of your time.

By accepting to proceed with the interview, you agree with the following statements:

1. *I have been given sufficient information about this research project.*
2. *I allow the researcher to take notes during the interview. I also may allow the recording of the interview and subsequent dialogue by audio tape.*
   - ☐ *I agree to record the interview*
   - ☐ *I don't agree to record the interview*
3. *I understand that any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that I cannot be identified. My name will not be written in the transcribed content nor be kept in any other records.*
4. ***When the results of the study are reported, I will not be identified by name or any other information that could be used to infer my identity.*** *Only researchers will have access to any data collected during this research however, data cannot be linked to me.*
5. *I understand that I may withdraw from this interview any time I wish and that I can skip any question I don't want to answer.*
6. *I understand that my refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which I otherwise am entitled to.*
7. *I have been informed that the research abides by all commonly acknowledged ethical codes and that the research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Lebanese American University.*
8. *I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can ask the research team listed below.*
9. *I have read and understood all statements on this form.*
10. *I voluntarily agree to take part in this research project by undertaking the interview.*

Participant's Full Name:

Participant's Signature: *Date Signed:*

If you have any questions, you may contact:

Name (PI)	*Phone number*	*Email address*
Dania Makki	*+961 3 790756*	*Dania.saad@lau.edu.lb*
Abdul-Nasser El-Kassar	*+961 3 915257*	*Abdulnasser.kassar@lau.edu.lb*

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or you want to talk to someone outside the research, please contact the:

Institutional Review Board Office,
Lebanese American University
3rd Floor, Dorm A, Byblos Campus
Tel: 00 961 1 786456 ext. (2546)
irb@lau.edu.lb

This study has been reviewed and approved by the LAU IRB.

Appendix B

Interview Guide for the Semi-Structured Interviews

Staff, Faculty, and Executive Officers

Participant's understanding for the role of universities and the concept of social responsibility in higher education:

1. What is your understanding for:
    a. The role of universities and their impact?
    b. The concept of social responsibility in higher education?

2. In your opinion, what are the main challenges affecting private universities in Lebanon?

3. Considering the current local crises, which university role seems the most pressing, and what are universities' contributions?

Participant's awareness of the socially responsible programs/practices/initiatives undertaken by the university and their value:

4. What does your university practice in terms of social responsibility? In which areas/functions does it display social responsibility (across Teaching? Research? Management? Extension Activities?)

5. How about the department that you work for/oversee. Did it initiate any activities or programs that exhibit social responsibility?

6. If the answer to Q5 is YES, what initiated these particular initiatives? What was the motivation behind them?

7. Were they part of an institutional policy / long-term strategic plan / departmental strategy? Were you supported/hampered by the institutional policies throughout the execution process?

8. What are the consequences of these initiatives and their perceived impact on the various stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, society, etc.)?

9. Did this initiative build any special / closer relationships with particular groups and how?

10. How is it expected to influence the university's future plans/strategies/decisions?

11. In your opinion, can your department/university invest more in USR? If yes, in which specific areas? If you can give an example.

Participant's view on the relationship between USR and funding resources:

12. In your opinion, what are the factors that affect the university's attraction for:
    a. Students (new and currently enrolled)
    b. Funds, grants, donations, etc.

13. Can university's social responsibility be an attractive factor that impacts students' recruitment and retention, as well as funding resources? Why or why not?

Participant's view on the value of USR and its impact on the progress of the institution:

14. Considering the three missions of a university: teaching, research, and social engagement, if you were to invest efforts and resources in implementing USR in one area at a time, which one would you choose first and why?

15. Do you think that raising awareness on the university social responsibility and promoting its socially responsible acts within internal and external communities would make any difference to:
    a. Prospective students and their parents?
    b. Currently enrolled students?
    c. Faculty and staff?
    d. The society at large
    e. The future of the institution?

    If YES, at which level and to what extent? If NO, why not?

Students & Alumni

Participant's understanding for the role of universities and the concept of social responsibility in higher education:

1. What is your understanding for:
    a. The role of universities?
    b. The concept of social responsibility in higher education?

2. Considering the current local crises, what is the role and expected contributions of universities?

Participant's awareness of the socially responsible programs/practices/initiatives undertaken by the university and their value:

3. What does your university practice in terms of social responsibility? In which areas/functions does it display social responsibility (across Teaching? Research? Management? Extension Activities?)

4. Did you engage in any socially responsible activities or programs at your university?

5. If the answer to Q4 is YES, what initiated these particular initiatives? What was the motivation behind them?

6. Were they part of a course or program/research project/extracurricular activities/ or others? Were you supported/hampered by institutional policies throughout the execution process?

7. What are the consequences of these initiatives and their perceived impact on the various stakeholders (other students, staff, faculty, society, etc.)?

8. Did these initiatives build any special / closer relationships with particular groups and how?

Participant's view on the value of USR and their perception of its impact on them and on the progress of the institution:

9. Did your experience with this USR related course/program/research project/extracurricular activities make any difference to you, did it impact you at any level? (what did you learn and practice, what did it teach you? Key takeaways? please explain).

10. Is what you learned/gained out of this experience transferable and replicable into your personal/professional life?

11. In your opinion, can your university invest more in USR? If YES, in which specific areas? If you can give an example.

12. Do you think that raising awareness on the university social responsibility and promoting its socially responsible acts within internal and external communities would make any difference to:
    a. Prospective students and their parents?
    b. Currently enrolled students?
    c. Faculty and staff?
    d. The society at large?
    e. The future of the institution?