

ARTICLE

Corporate universities: an emerging actor in higher education in Spain?

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Abstract

Corporate universities are a growing phenomenon in present-day Spanish society. Corporations increasingly depend on knowledge and, as an alternative to the gaps identified in traditional education, they are creating and strengthening these institutions in order to endow themselves with a type of training that is consistent with their needs, objectives and strategies. This article presents the main results of a study whose aim was to forecast the future role of corporate universities in Spain, a little-

studied reality despite its increasing importance. The study objectives were to identify certain aspects of corporate universities' future evolution (their role in Spanish society, their organisational changes and the challenges posed by ICTs) and to perform a prospective analysis of their relationships with traditional universities (comparative strengths and weaknesses, and future means of collaboration). The research technique used was the Delphi method, applied to a panel of experts formed by the heads of Spanish corporate universities. Besides collecting data on the above-mentioned study objectives, the results confirmed the important role that corporate universities would play in training and knowledge management within the framework of Spanish higher education, even though the participating specialists believed that they would become a complement rather than a direct competitor to traditional universities.

Keywords

corporate universities, Spain, higher education, future, knowledge society

Universidades corporativas: ¿un actor emergente en la educación superior en España?

Resumen

Las universidades corporativas son un fenómeno en auge en la actual sociedad española. Las empresas son cada vez más dependientes del conocimiento y por eso, como alternativa a las lagunas que detectan en la educación tradicional, están creando y consolidando estas instituciones para dotarse de una formación acorde a sus necesidades, objetivos y estrategias. En este artículo se exponen los principales resultados de una investigación cuyo objetivo era prever el futuro de las universidades corporativas en España, una realidad apenas estudiada a pesar de su creciente relevancia. Por una parte, se perseguía conocer aspectos de la evolución futura de las propias universidades corporativas (papel que desempeñarán en la sociedad española, cambios que afrontarán en su organización y retos que les supondrán las TIC). Y por otra, hacer una prospectiva de su relación con las universidades tradicionales (ventajas y debilidades frente a ellas y futuras vías de colaboración). La técnica de investigación utilizada fue el método Delphi, aplicado sobre un panel de expertos compuesto por responsables de universidades corporativas en España. Además de recogerse diversos datos sobre los objetivos de la investigación mencionados, los resultados evidencian el destacado papel que las universidades corporativas tendrán en la gestión de la formación y el conocimiento en el marco de la educación superior española, si bien los especialistas participantes consideran que serán más un complemento que una competencia directa de las universidades tradicionales.

Palabras clave

universidades corporativas, España, educación superior, futuro, sociedad del conocimiento

1. Introduction

In recent years, Spanish universities have been under the pressure of constant change, redefining themselves in accordance with what Pereyra, Luzón and Sevilla (2006) regard as adaptation to market forces. Since the signature of the Sorbonne Joint Declaration in 1998 and the Bologna Declaration in 1999, Spanish universities have endeavoured to redefine themselves in the European Higher

Education Area (EHEA) in order to become more competitive in the international arena. These documents pointed to the need for changes that would ensure better labour market inclusion of graduates, as does the most recent Lisbon Declaration.

Parallel to these changes, however, the world of business is beginning to offer the type of training that was once the exclusive domain of traditional universities, basically because the extraordinary market value of knowledge is rising (Sanz Fernández, 2006). Consequently, we are witnessing the emergence of new institutions that also focus on citizen education, which present themselves as a competitor or a complement to traditional universities. In this article, we will concentrate on so-called 'corporate universities' founded by large corporations to meet their training needs and, ultimately, their business objectives. According to Waltuck (2003), their goal is to support organisations' strategic objectives by investing in human capital. Allen (2007) asserts that it is precisely this strategic dimension that distinguishes them from traditional corporate training departments, which generally speaking are simply tactical. Thus, the strategic nature of corporate universities turns them into key organisations for strengthening corporate social responsibility (Renaud-Coulon, 2008).

In the globalised world, competition between corporations is ever greater and changes occur at a frenetic pace. Corporations are therefore forced to adopt a learning culture as a key aspect of their strategies, creating tools that enable them to manage the knowledge and talent that is at their disposal to achieve their goals. This is so because, as Corominas and Sacristán point out, universities obviously cannot educate people to immediately fit into one of many varied types of organisation that they might join after graduating (2011). These organisations and corporations are more dependent than ever on knowledge, and they are forced to seek alternatives to the structures – that they sometimes perceive as relatively inflexible – of many traditional universities; hence the advent of corporate universities.

They emerged in the United States in the early 1960s. McDonald's Hamburger University was an early pioneer of corporate universities, and was gradually followed by others founded by IBM, Disney, General Motors, Motorola, AT&T, Dell, Ford and Boeing. According to Paton et al. (2005), their numbers began to increase in the 1980s and, by the late 1990s, there were over 1,000 in the United States. In Europe, this type of institution first emerged in the United Kingdom, Germany and France, with universities being founded by Daimler-Benz, British Telecom, Lufthansa, Deutsche Bank, Siemens, Barclays, Alcatel, France Telecom and Fiat, to name but a few. The phenomenon reached Spain quite late on, though now there is a relatively high number of corporate universities. An early pioneer was Gas Natural Fenosa, whose university was founded in 2000. Then came those founded by BBVA, Santander, Asepeyo, Aviva, Ferrovial, Prosegur, Endesa, Everis, Abertis, Acciona, Indra, Aviva, Axa, Banesto, Ceaga, Gamesa, Enagás, Endesa, Fnac, NH Hoteles, Orange, Telefónica and REE, among others.

e-Learning has helped them expand, so much so that they may even end up becoming new business units within those corporations. The drawbacks of distance education, especially those relating to anonymity and subsequent student demotivation and dropout, have been overcome by the growing implementation of blended learning programmes. Ramírez Cortes (2008) tells us that the most successful experiences of corporate virtual training are based on blended learning. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that this mode of learning is becoming increasingly important in

corporate universities, just as it is in traditional universities. In fact, Ruiz García et al. (2010) point out that the current trend in European and North American universities is to incorporate more blended learning than pure e-learning.

Despite the rise of these institutions, very little research has been done on the topic. Most publications come from the Anglosphere, precisely because of the phenomenon's importance within it. They take the form of informative works or handbooks for running and managing corporate universities (Meister, 1998; Allen, 2002; Wheeler & Cleeg, 2005; Grenzer, 2006; Dealtry, 2010), and also of monographs dealing with the reality of corporate universities in a more holistic and reflective way (Jarvis, 2001; Paton, Peters, Storey & Taylor, 2005; Allen, 2007; Renaud-Coulon, 2008). The majority of reflections on corporate universities published in international scientific journals are reviews of these authors' works, with hardly any contributions that help to further our knowledge of those universities (Heinz, 2001; Elton, 2002; Huisman, 2002; Alstete, 2008). In Spain, the phenomenon is recent, and this explains why scientific production on it is scant. The translation of the book by Jarvis and the recent study on setting up a corporate university in the food sector (Ruiz García et al., 2010) are two of very few works that we could mention. However, an example of the interest that corporate universities are beginning to arouse is the organisation of several scientific forums on the topic, as well as the considerable number of items in professional journals and publications, which are not detailed here because they do not have a scientific dimension.

Thus, it is necessary go deeper into the scientific study of corporate universities. While different from traditional universities, they are beginning to move up the ranks within the context of knowledge and learning spaces in Spanish society. Jarvis (2001) critically asserts that "universities have already become buffeted by global capitalism and are becoming more like the corporates that control the corporate universities". It is not without reason that much has been said about the concept of academic capitalism in order to explain the dynamics governing traditional universities, where university autonomy appears to be giving way to market criteria in knowledge production and management. The result is universities that are primarily orientated towards training people to become qualified professionals depending on the needs of business. Without disregarding those points of reference, some intellectuals are driven to stand up for universities as institutions committed to solving social problems. However, it is true to say that traditional universities no longer have a monopoly over knowledge in society, and that is why, according to García Garrido (2009), the most appropriate thing to do would be to foster institutional plurality within the framework of a diverse higher education system.

Hence, the purpose of this exploratory study, whose results are presented here, was to perform a prospective analysis of corporate universities in Spain (hereafter 'CUS'), collecting data about the main trends that would characterise them over the next 10 years. We believed that getting a better insight into this little-studied reality would be a valuable contribution in terms of elucidating the challenges that traditional universities would have to face. The specific study objectives were to identify certain aspects of CUS's future evolution (their role in Spanish society, their organisational changes and the challenges posed by ICTs) and to perform a prospective analysis of their relationships with traditional universities (comparative strengths and weaknesses, and future means of collaboration).

2. Method

We chose a research method based on collecting and statistically processing experts' opinions on the topic. Taking into account the emerging nature of CUS and the almost non-existent scientific literature on them, this method was considered to be the most suitable for forecasting their future evolution. We specifically chose the Delphi method. It is a subjective forecasting technique that is valid for obtaining useful data about uncertain situations, as is the case for the object of study in hand, and in particular for making forecasts – a matter to which the objectives of our study refer. It is an iterative and systematic process in which questions are put to a panel of experts in successive rounds in order to obtain a reliable group opinion. Compared to other subjective forecasting techniques of an individual nature such as surveys, the Delphi method is a group technique and, as the final results come from group interaction, they are greater than the sum of individual contributions.

Heads of CUS were selected to form part of the panel of experts; because of their situation and personal resources, it was felt that they could provide data that would be more useful to the attainment of the study objectives. Besides being specialists in the topic, they are also actively involved in it. We contacted them and the response was very satisfactory. The following initially confirmed their participation in the study: Marina Lledó (Abertis), Carolina Espuny (Asepeyo), Fernando Gordillo Villafuertes (Aviva), José Luis García Hernández (Enagás), Pablo Fernández-Olano (Endesa), Sergio Larrea (Everis), Juan Ramón García (Ferrovial), Reyes Tello (Fnac), Eduardo García Gerboles (Gamesa), José Ángel Fernández Izard (Gas Natural Fenosa), Almudena Rodríguez Tarodo (Grupo Santander), Carlos Pelegrín Fernández (Orange) and Luis Reina (Red Eléctrica de España). Despite the fact that other potential groups of experts existed, the group referred to above was chosen because this study is a first step towards exploring and gaining knowledge about the object of study, which could be furthered in subsequent phases by drawing on the opinions of these and other groups of specialists, depending in the availability of funding and other resources.

The dropout rate was around 7% (in published works, it is usually between 20% and 30% (Landeta, 2002)), so there was no danger of it skewing the final results. The number of members on the panel of experts was scientifically valid because it was twice the minimum threshold of seven experts established by Rand Corporation managers in the early years of the method to ensure the accuracy of group estimation. In addition, the Delphi method does not require the sample to be statistically representative, but rather significant, which was fully guaranteed owing to the relatively small number of CUS.

Between February and April 2011, the experts were asked to complete several electronic questionnaires. The first (Figure 1) contained open questions. Based on the answers given in the first questionnaire, several items with the potential to yield closed answers were extracted and incorporated into the second questionnaire. The design of the second questionnaire took into account the fact that those answers were in keeping with the type of Delphi methodology used; in other words, that they could subsequently be subjected to statistical processing to determine a statistical group answer. The experts were therefore asked to score the items on a scale from 0 to 5 to facilitate numerical integration of the answers. Scoring was chosen over hierarchical evaluation of

the items because, for most of the questions, the number of answer options was quite high. It was therefore easier for the experts to give a score.

Figure 1. Delphi questionnaire used as the starting point for the iterative process.

<i>Questionnaire 1</i>
1. In your opinion, what mission or role will CUS play in Spanish Society over the next 10 years? Indicate a minimum of three aspects.
2. List the five main changes that, as a CUS, your internal organisation will undergo over the next 10 years.
3. What main challenges will ICTs pose for CUS over the next 10 years? Indicate the five challenges that you consider the most important.
4. State the five main competitive advantages that CUS will have over traditional universities over the next 10 years.
5. List the five main drawbacks that CUS will have in comparison to traditional universities over the next 10 years.
6. Indicate the five main means of collaboration between CUS and traditional universities over the next 10 years.

In the second round, statistical data were not given to the experts because Delphi method scholars dispute whether doing so actually enriches the process (Báez & Pérez de Tudela, 2007). The iterative process was concluded with the second round to prevent the participants from becoming demotivated and thus putting the reliability of the final results at risk. According to Landeta (2002), in Delphi studies it is rare to reach a third round, so the criterion set to stop at the end of the second round was perfectly valid in terms of ensuring the scientific rigour of the process. In order to present the results of the process, the answers given were integrated into a group estimation. Individual answers were treated as equal in value, irrespective of the expert giving them. As most of the answers to the questions in the second round were scores, a central tendency measure was calculated for each item in each question, and then the items were ordered by the central values obtained. The central tendency measure used was the median and not the mean, mainly because using the latter would have given too much weight to the extreme values, which could have skewed the group opinion.

3. Results

Summarised below are the main final results of the study, which are specified in greater detail in the tables. In the tables, the items are shown in descending order of consensus; in other words, from higher to lower median and, when the same median corresponds to several items, from lower to higher standard deviation. The results are divided into two parts, in accordance with the specific objectives of our study: to identify certain aspects of CUS's future evolution and to perform a prospective analysis of their relationships with traditional universities.

Regarding the first objective, the experts were asked about the role that CUS would play over the next 10 years (Table 1). Coming first was the importance that they would have in managing knowledge, a mission that they shared with traditional universities. In fact, in the experts' opinion, the

Tabla 1. CUS: role in Spanish society

Rank	Item	Median	Mean	SD
1	Promoting and transferring corporate culture and knowledge	5	4.75	0.43
2	Safeguarding global knowledge generation and transfer	5	4.58	0.64
3	Constituting a differential element to increase the value of corporations	5	4.33	0.94
4	Helping directors to become involved in professionals' training	5	4.25	1.01
5	Serving as a support for business strategy implementation	5	4.33	1.18
6	Coordinating training in corporations	4.5	4.5	0.5
6	Making corporations more competitive and productive	4.5	4.5	0.5
7	Serving as a forum for exchanging ideas and knowledge between corporations and society	4.5	4.33	0.75
8	Covering training needs that traditional education does not meet	4.5	4.33	0.85
9	Assuring employee qualification and employability	4	4.33	0.62
10	Fostering the importance of lifelong learning	4	4.17	0.69
11	Managing and training talent in society	4	3.5	0.87
12	Focusing on the excellence of corporations' employees and directors	4	4.17	0.9
13	Growing the university-corporation relationship	4	4	0.91
14	Fostering R&D in the corporation or its sectoral field	4	3.75	0.92
15	Helping to establish job profiles and professional routes	4	3.42	1.11
16	Fostering the training and selection of highly qualified staff	3.5	3.83	0.9
17	Contributing to society's economic development and innovation	3.5	3.67	0.94

Own elaboration

main role of CUS would be to promote and transfer corporate culture and knowledge, which would increase the value of corporations and contribute to global knowledge. Albeit with less consensus, they also believed that CUS would help the directors of the organisation to become involved in professionals' training, or would serve as a support for business strategy implementation. Secondly, they gave high scores to their mission of coordinating training in corporations in order to make them more competitive, and also to a further two questions relating to their role in society: they would become places for exchanging ideas and knowledge between organisations and society, and would cover the gaps in traditional education. Although important, the remaining aspects were scored somewhat lower, and they were once again connected with corporate interests. In contrast, they placed less importance on their role in improving Spanish society, despite the fact that they believed CUS would serve to strengthen relations between universities and corporations.

The fact that CUS are a recent phenomenon explains why they are undergoing constant changes. Regarding their internal organisation, the experts believed that over the next 10 years these changes would focus mainly on managing to align them with the business strategies and objectives of the corporations behind them, to improve the management and dissemination of internal and sectoral knowledge, to adapt their training strategies to ICTs, and to improve their teaching staff. Likewise, it would be crucial to implement systems enabling their efficiency to be better measured and to turn them into corporate communication and brand image tools. Some experts also pointed to the

need to overcome the scarcity of resources, though dissent was quite high. Albeit with slightly lower scores, Table 2 shows other important changes that CUS would have to undergo, such as optimising their capacity to manage social talent, greater internationalisation and entering into agreements with traditional universities. In addition, the future coexistence of face-to-face and virtual training was found; while the experts underscored the importance of having physical training spaces, there was less consensus among them when referring to the need to increase and consolidate virtual training. Finally, worthy of note are two significant data: first, opening up CUS to external groups was scored as quite an important trend, though dissent was quite high; and second, it seemed that, among the short-term changes, the creation of regulated degrees would not be important.

Firstly, as can be deduced from the previous table, ICTs would undoubtedly imply new challenges for CUS. According to the results of our study, the main ones would be: for the students, strengthening collaborative learning supported by Web 2.0 resources, improving e-learning platforms and designing tools to measure the impact of training programmes; and for the corporations, identifying and

Tabla 2. CUS: changes in internal organisation

Rank	Item	Median	Mean	SD
1	Total alignment with the organisation's business strategies and objectives	5	4.75	0.43
2	Improving the management and dissemination of internal and sectoral knowledge	5	4.67	0.62
3	Adapting to new forms of learning made possible by ICTs and Web 2.0	5	4.33	0.85
4	Better qualified teaching staff in the corporation	5	4.33	0.94
5	Better measurement of effectiveness and efficiency	4.5	4.42	0.64
6	Becoming important corporate communication tools	4.5	4.25	0.83
7	Overcoming the scarcity of resources and a vision that is too short-term	4.5	3.92	1.26
8	Increasing the capacity to capture and retain talent	4	4.33	0.62
9	A more multinational dimension, similar to that of the corporations behind CUS	4	4.25	0.72
10	Complete management of the project from within the corporation	4	3.92	0.76
10	The need to form alliances with traditional universities	4	4.08	0.76
11	Greater internationalisation of models, staff or management bodies	4	4.17	0.8
12	Being more flexible and permeable to external trends	4	4	0.82
13	Going beyond the virtual dimension and having more physical training spaces	4	3.67	0.94
14	Training with a greater degree of specialisation	4	4.08	0.95
15	Improving technological facilities and didactic media	4	3.92	1.04
16	Having a governing body formed by business-related members	4	4	1.08
17	Greater integration with other HR processes, going so far as to absorb training departments and even HR management	4	3.5	1.12
18	Increasing and consolidating virtual training	4	3.75	1.16
19	Opening up to external groups, reaching out beyond employees or directors	4	3.58	1.19
20	External collaboration of experts, and more streamlined personnel structures	3.5	3.75	1.01
21	Designing and implementing regulated degrees	3	3.17	1.21

Own elaboration

managing sources of internal and sectoral knowledge. And secondly, the experts also considered other issues, as detailed in Table 3, to be quite important. They were mainly connected with better communication with students and better use of feedback, more up-to-date, innovative and flexible training processes and, in general, better face-to-face and online training, which, as we have seen, would coexist.

Besides identifying certain aspects of CUS's future evolution, another objective of this study was to perform a prospective analysis of their relationships with traditional universities. Proof of the importance of these relationships is that, in the results analysed up to the time of writing this article, there were reiterated calls to establish ties between both types of institution.

The experts were asked about the main competitive advantages that CUS's would have over traditional universities over the next 10 years, and one of the most highly valued items was that the

Tabla 3. CUS: challenges posed by ICTS

Rank	Item	Median	Mean	SD
1	More collaborative learning thanks to the use of Web 2.0 resources	5	4.58	0.49
2	Identifying and managing sources of internal knowledge, and disseminating that knowledge	5	4.58	0.64
3	Using powerful, flexible and intuitive e-learning platforms	5	4.58	0.76
4	Designing tools to measure the impact of training programmes	4.5	4.42	0.64
5	Adapting training programmes to students' needs	4	4	0.58
6	More direct, two-way communication with students	4	4.33	0.62
6	Incorporating innovative and creative elements into training processes	4	4.33	0.62
7	Greater flexibility and speed of response when faced with changes	4	4.25	0.72
8	Improving face-to-face training tools	4	3.75	0.83
9	Constantly updating training programme content	4	4.08	0.86
10	Greater use of virtual training as a complement to face-to-face training	4	4	0.91
10	Standardisation of training objects (e.g., SCORM)	4	4	0.91
11	Having more up-to-date tools for a more technologically aware staff	4	3.67	1.03
12	Adapting content to each geographical area where the corporation operates	4	3.83	1.07
13	Better training and greater involvement of lecturers in the ICT sphere	4	3.67	1.11
14	Having broadband networks capable of carrying high volumes of data	4	3.5	1.12
15	Greater and better exploitation of new distribution channels: mobiles, tablets, etc.	4	3.83	1.21
16	Better knowledge of ICTs and their application to teaching-learning models, fostering independent and informal learning	4	3.67	1.25
17	Encouraging the various departments of corporations – especially HR – to overcome their resistance to ICTs	4	3.58	1.26
18	Improving the information systems for each CUS department, and integrating them into the corporation's other systems	4	3.58	1.32
19	Making full use of cloud computing potential	3.5	3.75	1.01
20	Helping to update older employees' ICT skills and competencies	3	3.42	0.76

Own elaboration

institutions would not compete, but rather complement each other; 75% of the experts gave this item the highest score. They also emphasised other advantages, which are shown in Table 4. The main ones were that CUSs were more orientated towards the reality of business owing to the involvement of corporations and their directors in them, and also to the fact that they were useful for an internal goal such as employee motivation, were based on more practical training, and allowed training itineraries to be more personalised. Albeit with slightly lower scores, they felt that the following advantages were also important: proactive nature, greater internationalisation, greater flexibility and adaptation to change, greater potential as think tanks, greater employability, and training that focused more on skills and competencies, among others.

Regarding the weaknesses of CUS in comparison to traditional universities (Table 5), there was less consensus among the experts, and their scores were much lower. There could be two reasons for this: either a lack of self-criticism in some cases or the diversity of CUS models, which made it difficult to agree on common drawbacks. Taking into account that the most highly valued item was still that the two types of institution would not compete, it could be concluded that it was the lack of self-criticism. However, the level of dissent was much higher than that for the previous question, meaning that the high score given to that item could be interpreted as a shield that some experts

Tabla 4. CUS: advantages over traditional universities

Rank	Item	Median	Mean	SD
1	Orientated towards the reality of corporations, their needs and objectives	5	4.83	0.37
2	Useful for promoting employee motivation	5	4.58	0.49
3	More practical and flexible training	5	4.67	0.62
4	Traditional universities and CUS do not compete; they complement each other	5	4.58	0.86
5	Personalisation of training itineraries	4.5	4.5	0.5
6	Involvement of directors in strategies and programmes	4.5	4.33	0.75
7	Proactive nature, compared to the reactivity of traditional universities	4	4.25	0.6
8	Greater internationalisation	4	4	0.71
9	Greater flexibility, updating and adaptation to change	4	4.25	0.72
9	Greater potential as think tanks	4	4.25	0.72
10	Greater assurance of employability	4	4.08	0.76
11	Training focused more on skills and competencies	4	3.92	0.86
12	Quality assurance in the training process by means of regular assessments	4	3.75	0.92
13	More attractive image for students and lecturers	4	3.5	0.96
14	Ability to measure the impact of learning	4	3.92	1.04
15	More computerisation and better use of ICTs	3.5	3.58	0.86
16	Return on RD&I investment in a shorter term	3.5	3.58	1.04
17	Lower costs and better optimisation of resources	3.5	3.33	1.31
18	Year-round availability	3	2.83	1.07
19	Broader portfolio of services; not just training	3	3.33	1.25

Own elaboration

hid behind to avoid having to critically expose CUS's shortcomings. Along the same lines, it was also significant that the experts partly blamed the second most important drawback of CUS on traditional universities: the lack of a tradition of collaboration between universities and corporations in Spain. With moderate scores and progressively higher levels of dissent, other drawbacks of CUS over the next 10 years would be their specialist nature, excessive ties to proactivity and less social recognition, followed by others like very limited budgets and infrastructures, a more short-term view, scant student engagement or insufficient human resources.

Taking into account the above-mentioned weakness of CUS, the experts believed that the main means of collaboration between them and traditional universities was the personal participation of the latter's teaching staff in their training programmes. They also believed that the participation of CUS's lecturers in university teaching would be important, though somewhat less so. Likewise, they maintained that CUS would become an ideal complement to university education, mainly because the training was more practical and closely related to the reality of business, and also more

Tabla 5. CUS: drawbacks in comparison to traditional universities

Rank	Item	Median	Mean	SD
1	Traditional universities and CUS do not compete; they complement each other	5	4.17	1.34
2	The lack of a tradition of collaboration between universities and corporations in Spain	3.5	3.67	1.18
3	Specialist knowledge, compared to traditional universities' general knowledge	3	3	0.91
4	Excessive ties to proactivity	3	2.67	0.94
5	Less visibility and social recognition	3	2.58	0.95
6	Very limited facilities and infrastructures	3	2.92	1.04
7	Limited number of training hours and shorter-term training plans	3	2.67	1.11
8	Limited budgets	3	3	1.15
9	Scant student engagement	3	2.58	1.19
9	Insufficient human resources because the staff is highly optimised	3	2.5	1.19
10	Greater difficulties in assessing and measuring learning	3	2.83	1.21
11	Seeking ROI on training, and giving priority to work-related rather than training-related objectives	3	3.33	1.25
12	Insufficient support from directors	3	2.75	1.36
12	Restricted scope of action, nearly always limited to employees	3	2.75	1.36
13	Greater difficulties for conducting research, especially the type of research that is useful for society's progress	3	2.83	1.4
14	Training programmes are not officially recognised or do not have external accreditation	2.5	2.83	1.14
15	The use of the term 'university' is seen as suspicious by traditional universities	2.5	2.58	1.44
16	Overly informal training models	2	2.08	0.76
17	Absence of collaboration among CUS, with the risk of duplicating efforts	2	2.33	1.84
18	CUS's staff turnover is too high	1	1.58	1.04

Own elaboration

Tabla 6. CUS: means of collaboration with traditional universities

Rank	Item	Median	Mean	SD
1	Participation of traditional universities' teaching staff in CUS's training programmes	5	4.58	0.49
2	A complement to general education offered by traditional universities, because CUS training is more practical, specialist and closely related to the reality of business	4.5	4.42	0.64
3	A complement – conceived as lifelong learning – to university education, to cover the gaps in university education prior to the labour market inclusion of graduates	4	4.25	0.6
4	Shared use of facilities and infrastructures	4	3.92	0.64
5	Collaboration to enable better student employability	4	4.17	0.69
5	Participation of CUS's lecturers in traditional universities' educational programmes	4	4.17	0.69
6	Joint development of RD&I lines and projects, aligned with corporations' strategic objectives	4	4.25	0.72
7	Establishing formal communication channels and management bodies formed by representatives from both types of institution	4	3.67	0.75
8	Developing joint degrees and training/educational programmes that are officially recognised, especially at postgraduate level	4	4.17	0.8
8	Fostering business internship programmes for students	4	4.17	0.8
9	Joint efforts on the design and development of new didactic tools, particularly linked to ICTs	4	3.75	0.92
10	Implementation of joint virtual training projects	4	3.67	1.03
11	Creation of joint research chairs	4	3.83	1.14
12	Shared governmental subsidies and grants	3	3.25	0.83
13	Technological support for traditional universities, provided by CUS	3	3.17	1.07

Own elaboration

permanent (lifelong); they also believed that it would cover the gaps in university education prior to the labour market inclusion of graduates. Table 6 shows the other means of collaboration in the following order: shared use of infrastructures, joint programmes for better student employability, joint RD&I projects, shared management bodies and communications channels, joint degrees, business internship programmes, and joint efforts on the design of innovative training programmes and tools linked mainly to ICTs.

4. Conclusions

In order to avoid being overly repetitive, rather than referring to the results already presented, we will use this space to consider a number of issues for debate that emerge from them. The study yielded unprecedented data on the two objectives set: CUS's future evolution and their relationships with traditional universities. We believe that this data is useful to the latter because CUS may be taking on some of the functions that used to be their domain.

It can be concluded that CUS will increasingly become instruments for corporate communication and for training and knowledge management in Spanish society. It is not without reason that their directors considered that they would cover the gaps in traditional education. While it is true to say that they will focus mainly on corporations' internal knowledge, the current importance of corporations as social agents explains their growing role in global knowledge management. Higher education is becoming more and more diverse, and CUS are emerging institutions; traditional universities no longer have a monopoly over knowledge in society. According to our study, these institutions will become a complement to traditional universities and not so much a direct competitor. That is the reason why the future will entail closer ties between CUS and traditional universities, by sharing teaching staff, infrastructures, training programmes or RD&I actions.

While they share certain goals, the two types of institution will retain their differences. CUS will be tools aligned with corporations' strategic objectives, and they will be farther removed from the social function that traditional universities fulfil. They will be more flexible and more inclined to seek work-related competency training, with a particular orientation towards technical knowledge. The other side of the coin is that they will continue to have less social recognition and will have to overcome a number of issues, such as their excessive specialisation and proactivity, short-term view or limited resources, though the experts consulted did not agree on all of these limitations.

Some of the results obtained contradict those described in certain works published on the topic of corporate universities, mainly because those works refer to the reality within the Anglosphere. For example, the experts in Spain had very divergent opinions on certain issues, such as whether, in the near future, CUS would find it more difficult to conduct research than traditional universities, or whether CUS would tend to implement officially recognised degrees or open up to external groups, thus competing directly with traditional education.

These disparities could be due to the diversity of CUS models, which might have led the experts to give opinions conditioned by the particular characteristics of the respective institutions that they managed. Nevertheless, they are proof of the need for further scientific research in this field. Our study is exploratory, and we are aware that we will have to fine tune the data obtained from it by conducting new studies. Moreover, while the panel of participating experts was significant from the Delphi-method viewpoint, the diversity of existing CUS models warrants a higher number of participants in future studies to enable the results obtained from this study to be complemented.

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