Contributions from a Private University in Peru

The Case of the Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University

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Knowledge Society and the University

The relationship between progress in the modern society and scientific and technological development has been and will be an issue of constant interest among policymakers and researchers. It is remarkable how research and research products generate changes that transform people’s lives. Nuclear energy, laparoscopic surgery, and man walking on the moon are a few examples of technological breakthrough. At the same time, discoveries have prompted new ideas to the point of transforming industrialized societies into knowledge-based economies. Change continues to happen at a fast pace. In this context, the most important factor to progress is no longer the availability of capital, labor, raw materials, or energy, but the information and knowledge that people can generate (Tünnermann and de Souza 2003).

According to an early report of the World Bank (1999), the difference between the poor and the rich, at the individual and country levels, is not only that poor people have fewer resources but less information. In present times, knowledge enlightens and drives all human transactions (Abello
et al. 2001). Hence, generating ideas is necessary in the society where universities play a central role. As the World Declaration on Higher Education (UNESCO 1998) noted, higher education should develop its mission in three dimensions: training, service, and research. In this context, the university becomes a powerful institution that provides services and contributes to the cultural, social, and economic development of society toward new models of growth.

The information society is an economic and social system where knowledge is the primary production factor and fundamental source of well-being and development (UNESCO, 2003). Under this premise, building policies that endorse research, innovation, and technology transfer is needed. As Iván De la Vega (2009) indicated, the promotion of scientific and technological advancement is the key to navigate the twenty-first century in the current knowledge-based society. However, universities face many economic and organizational difficulties in generating knowledge. In the Peruvian context, institutions are forced to develop strategies to organize and fund their resources efficiently. It is crucial for them to work with innovative models that include high-performance researchers and structures that facilitate the advancement of new ideas (Trujillo et al. 2010).

This chapter is a case study that examines how the Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University (UPCH: Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia) has been successful, as a private institution, in the production of scientific knowledge in Peru. This chapter begins by describing how the university has evolved to promote scientific research within a context of political instability in Peru. In particular, it highlights the structural, organizational, and management changes that the university has undergone to produce knowledge. The study also shows how the academic leadership has been able to place the institution at the top of Peruvian academic rankings. The discussion section provides insights for policy and implementation of similar cases in Latin America.

Peruvian Universities and Research

Peruvian university began with the foundation of the National University of San Marcos (Universidad Nacional de San Marcos) by Royal Proclamation on May 12, 1551. The initial institution had the schools (named faculties or facultades) of Theology and Arts that were followed by the creation of the faculties of Law and Medicine, where philosophy teaching was the basis for any professional career. After San Marcos, the Catholic Church