



Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions

Country Brief: Mexico

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About the British Council

The British Council was founded to create a friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and the wider world. The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We call this work cultural relations.

We work in over 100 countries, connecting millions of people with the United Kingdom through programmes and services in the English language, the Arts, Education and Society. We believe these are the most effective means of engaging with others, and we have been doing this work since 1934.

www.britishcouncil.org

About Plymouth University

Plymouth University is one of the leading modern universities in the UK, ranked in the top seven institutions under the age of fifty by Times Higher Education. The University was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2012, and was the first in the world to be awarded the Social Enterprise Mark in recognition of working as a genuine social enterprise, caring for communities, and protecting the planet. The study has been led by SERIO, an applied research unit based at Plymouth University, in collaboration with colleagues from the Institution's Futures Entrepreneurship Centre.

Using this report

Overview

This research seeks to identify the benefits and challenges of partnership between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs) with a particular focus on those operating within an international context. Specifically it explores:

- Existing partnerships between HEIs and social enterprise across twelve countries, spanning four continents;
- The benefits of existing cooperation between social enterprise and HEIs;
- The impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and funders; and,
- The role of HEIs in supporting an increased awareness of social entrepreneurship as a career option, and in assisting start-ups and early growth.

In May 2016, the British Council published the core research report¹ emanating from this study - *'Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions'* – which placed a deliberate focus on the macro international landscape for engagement between HEIs and social enterprise. In contrast, this report on Mexico provides a specific country focus, enabling a more granular view of social enterprise activity among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). As noted in the *'global research report'*, the disparity across countries in terms of the number of HEIs (and therefore the potential for a skewed sample) meant that the research focused on specific regions within three of the largest countries. In Mexico, this encompassed the four cities of Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara and Puebla. A similar report has been produced for each of the eleven other countries that participated in this study.

It is expected that the findings of this research will:

- Facilitate dialogue, networking and knowledge exchange, opening up avenues for greater international cooperation between HEIs, and a stronger global narrative on social value and the contribution of this activity to achieving social development goals.
- Assess and promote the role of HEIs in social enterprises and the benefits of existing co-operation, based upon an analysis of opportunities and challenges related to collaboration.
- Provide a body of evidence which supports and informs further research and collaboration opportunities.

All research outputs from this study, including this report, will be made available on the British Council Social Enterprise webpage: www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/reports

¹ Referred to hereon after as 'the global research report'.

Introduction

Outlining the research

This research is set against a context of global growth in higher education, and seeks to understand and enhance the role of international cooperation between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs). The study, led by Plymouth University for the British Council, is one of the first to attempt to identify the range of HEI activity in the social enterprise sector. Specifically, the study maps and explores existing partnerships between HEIs and SE; the benefits of existing cooperation; and the impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and funders.

One of the challenges of conducting social enterprise research on a global level is that the term is governed by different legal frameworks, terminology, and cultural approaches. For this study, the researchers adopted the www.socialenterprise.org.uk definition, which considers a social enterprise to be:

“A business that trades to tackle social problems, improve communities, people’s life chances, or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community”

Study approach

The global research was undertaken with over two hundred HEIs drawn from Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom and the USA. These twelve countries were selected to provide a wide range of different geographical locations, higher education structures, and levels of economic development and rates of growth. The study comprised three core methodological stages:

Approach	Overview
Desk-based review of social enterprise activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This included academic and grey literature, as well as media sources such as HEI and news websites, blogs, and third party partner organisation websites. ▪ The review was supported by consultations with British Council representatives from each country and explored country-specific issues such as variations in the definition of social enterprise, legal structures for the sector, and challenges to growth.
HEI survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An online survey was sent to all known HEIs in each country to map social enterprise activity, and to explore the benefits and challenges of partnership working. ▪ The survey was disseminated to 993 HEIs, yielding a return of 205 (a 21% response rate).
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In-depth semi-structured interviews with up to three HEIs from each country, to capture their social enterprise activity and partnerships in more detail. ▪ This data was combined with analysis from the preceding two stages to formulate a series of case studies of practice.

With specific regard to Mexico, forty-seven HEIs from Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara and Puebla were invited to complete a survey, yielding a return of eight – a response of 17%. Where possible, the survey was targeted toward named contacts with knowledge of, or responsibility for social enterprise at their institution. Whilst this approach was felt to provide the most rounded view of cross-institutional engagement and practice, it should be noted that any views expressed may not necessarily reflect the official stance of their HEI.

The survey findings have been exemplified and elaborated upon through the inclusion of case studies of practice from two Mexican HEIs, and consultation with representatives from the British Council team in the UK.

The British Council's social enterprise programme

Social enterprises address social and environmental problems through innovative solutions that improve people's lives in our communities and societies. The British Council's global social enterprise programme draws on the UK experience in social enterprise to promote its growth around the world. We build capacity in the sector, forge international networks, and support policy leaders to create ecosystems in which social enterprise and social investment can thrive. Our work supports positive social change, inclusive growth and sustainable development while building trust and creating opportunities between the UK and other countries.

The landscape for social enterprise

Country overview

The higher education system in Mexico dates back to the 16th Century, and is large and heterogeneous in nature. Currently, there are approximately 2,000 private universities, 400 public universities and 60 technological universities in Mexico; and the responsibility for the sector varies between federal and state levels depending on the nature of the institution.² In 2013, there were over 3 million student enrolments in Mexico, representing around 2.7% of the total population.³ This is slightly lower than the average number of student enrolments as a proportion of the total population across the 12 study countries described in this research, with the mean average across the 12 countries standing at 3.6%.

The term ‘social enterprise’, or ‘negocio social’, has limited resonance in Mexico; and, historically, other terms such as ‘social entrepreneurship’ or the broader ‘social economy’ have been much more frequently cited. This may be somewhat due to the many coexisting forms of social entrepreneurship in Mexico – such as ejidos (communally owned land used for agriculture), cooperatives and workers’ organisations, among others – and the lack of clear distinction between them.⁴

Approaches to social enterprise

Early forms of social enterprise developed following the profound crisis of the Mexican economy in the 1970s and 1980s and subsequent distrust in the public sector’s ability to deliver services effectively. Since then, the ‘social economy’ has developed and is comprised of a number of different organisations working towards various social impact goals. Although they all fall within the loose definition of the social economy, these different types of social organisations have varying operational structures and legal frameworks governing their practice.

Mexico introduced a legal framework for the sector, entitled the Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy (LESS), in 2012. The establishment of the law provides formal identification of the types of organisations that make up the social sector, but does not provide a clear definition for social enterprise or the criteria that identifies an organisation as such.⁴ It has since been suggested that the lack of clear definition for social enterprise in Mexico has implications for academic and public policy engagement; and greater convergence is needed between the traditional Mexican social economy and global social enterprise terminology.⁵ Social enterprise was not included in a National Development Plan for 2013-18 and so it is unclear whether policy related to the sector will materialise in the immediate future.

Support for social enterprise

Following the introduction of LESS in 2012, the National Institute of Social Economy of Mexico (INAES) was established as a decentralised agency of the Ministry of Social Development. The institute has been tasked with implementing public policy and promoting the social economy sector through training, research, dissemination and support on projects. INAES is also responsible for

² European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities (2012) Comparative Study between the EU and Mexico on the challenges brought about by the Internationalisation of higher education and the transparency tools developed on both sides to facilitate mobility and academic cooperation. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2012/eu-mexico-report_en.pdf

³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016). Enrolment by level of education. Available at: http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS

⁴ ICSEM (2015) Social Enterprise in Mexico: Concepts in Use in the Social Economy. Available at: http://www.iap-socent.be/sites/default/files/Mexico%20-%20Conde_0.pdf

⁵ Conde.C.B. (2015) Can the social sector of the economy in Mexico converge on the concept of social economy? Available at: http://www.ciriec2015.com/resources/files/CIRIEC2015_0343_paper.pdf

running the Programme for Promotion of the Social Economy and provides fiscal incentives and packages of support for members actively engaged in the sector. In addition, the National Institute of Entrepreneurship (INADEM) is an administrative department of the Ministry of Economy, which aims to implement and coordinate national policy in support of social entrepreneurs who contribute to economic development and social welfare.

Working alongside, and often in collaboration with INAES and INADEM, are various other support organisations, foundations and charities; operating both locally and internationally. Prominent national support organisations in Mexico include Promotora Social Mexico and New Ventures Mexico who provide financing, acceleration programmes and promotion of social enterprises to contribute towards the advancement of a wider SE ecosystem across the country. The former supports the development of new and existing social enterprises with a particular emphasis on integrating disadvantaged and marginalised groups back into society; while the latter provides support for enterprises in a range of sectors, particularly those with a focus on sustainable agriculture, clean technology, clean energy and ecotourism.

In terms of financial support, the establishment of new venture capital funds in Mexico are responding to a gap in provision of affordable finance; enabling growing enterprises to improve their financial systems and management capacities in preparation for scaling up. Such venture funds include Ignia and Adobe Capital who provide investment opportunities and strategic support for high-growth social enterprises in Mexico.

The role of HEIs

In Mexico, the higher education system plays a key role in promoting societal change. Mexico is one of the few countries to have a mandatory service component for students enrolled in higher education; in which every student is required to complete a set number of hours of community work in order to successfully complete their degree. While Mexico's National Association of Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) and its Higher Education Commission for Social Service (CISS) help manage the service component, each university defines its own processes and requirements for compliance. Thus, stipulated hours can vary between institutions, but typically range from 400 – 600 hours of work over a period of six to twelve months depending on the course and stage of study. It is estimated that more than 374 million hours of community service are carried out each year; meaning that social enterprises in Mexico are able to benefit from this valuable student resource.

HEIs in Mexico are also supporting the social enterprise sector in more direct and specific ways. For example, Red Emprendia is a network of universities across Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Spain, Mexico and Portugal, that exists to promote innovation and responsible entrepreneurship. Every two years, the network runs 'Spin', a large-scale event connecting and promoting social entrepreneurship across Latin American universities. Mexico City's Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico hosted the 2014 bi-annual event, in partnership with Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey; a university primarily based in Monterrey. Along with other partners they provided a comprehensive programme of lectures, debates, competitions, training and networking for students, researchers, universities, entrepreneurs, companies and investors.

Mexican HEIs are also integrating the concept of social enterprise into the academic curriculum; for example, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey now offers an accredited social entrepreneurship course, 'emprendimiento cultural y social'; and other HEIs are encouraging the development of student-led social enterprises; such as 'Seed' a new start-up developed at Universidad Iberoamericana Leon, Guanajuato.

Overview of social enterprise activity

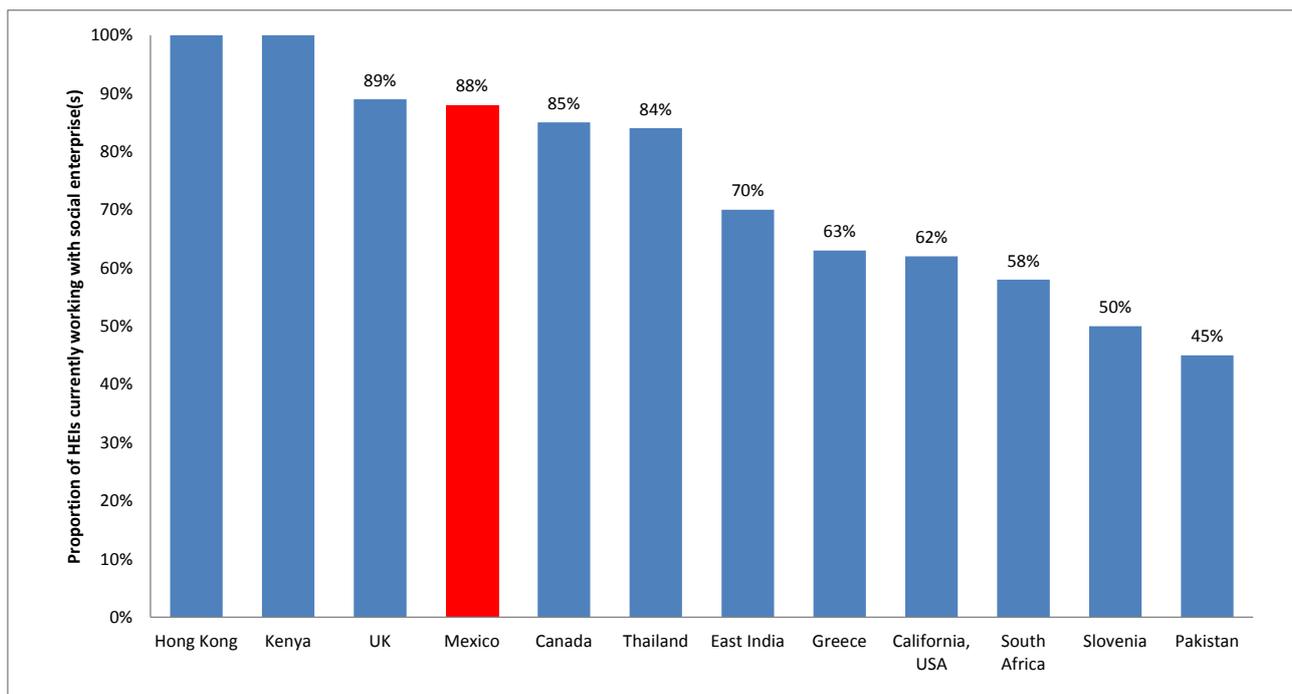
Introduction

This section firstly summarises the scale and characteristics of HEI and SE partnerships in Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara and Puebla, from hereon in referred to as 'Mexico', followed by a review of priority areas, and discussion on the benefits and approaches to supporting social enterprise. Where appropriate, the analysis draws on findings from the eleven other countries of focus in order to provide a comparator position to Mexico (see *'Using this report'*).

The scale of social enterprise activity

Reflecting how HEIs in Mexico play a key role in facilitating societal change, social enterprise activity amongst Mexican institutions was commonplace. As illustrated in Chart 1, of the eight responding HEIs, seven (88%) were found to have active partnerships at the time of the survey - the fourth highest proportional concentration of HEI/SE activity across all study countries. Notably, the remaining HEI (12%) whilst not currently working with social enterprise(s) stated an intention to do so in the future.

Chart 1: Proportion of institutions from each country currently working with social enterprises



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016
Base: 205

With regard to the number of active partnerships across responding Mexican HEIs, those who were working with social enterprise at the point of the survey, tended to have more partnerships than the global average; one institution engaged with between one and five partnerships, whilst five stated that they had over seventeen.⁶ This may be related to the role that Mexican higher education institutions play in contributing to community development; evidenced through the mandatory service component present across the country's higher education system, as described in *'The landscape for social enterprise'*.

⁶ One respondent was unsure how many social enterprise partnerships the HEI currently had.

International activity

Regarding the geographical scope of engagement amongst the seven Mexican institutions who reported having a current partnership(s) with social enterprise(s), four HEIs indicated that this included a partnership within their own country. However, a larger majority (5) specified their work with social enterprise(s) also included working internationally, such as being part of an international network; collaborating with social enterprises operating in other countries; or project activities such as presentations and competitions taking place on an international scale. This can be exemplified by international collaborations such as the Red Emprendia network of universities across Latin America and Europe, as noted in *'The landscape for social enterprise'*.

"Our campus is a certified campus 'Change Maker', which allows us to work closely with Ashoka, a global network that aims to support the development of social enterprise."

"We continue to develop links and relationships with people and institutions working with the social enterprise sector internationally"

"We participate in international academic events and meetings for knowledge-share experiences"

"A competition we run includes a category on 'Social Entrepreneurship' where social entrepreneurs operating in Mexico and Latin America can compete. The winners of this award have participated in international panels to exchange experiences"

"Annually, we take part in the 'Hult Prize' challenge where students enter with their idea for a social enterprise that will create high impact. Last year, for the first time, the national final of this global competition was held here"

The scale of international activity was diverse; one HEI worked on one to five international projects; one worked with between six and ten; one had engaged in between eleven and sixteen; and one stated that they had participated in over seventeen international projects.⁷

Equally varied was the proportion of total work with social enterprise that international activity accounted for. Two institutions stated that international partnerships accounted for approximately five per cent of their social enterprise engagement and activity, whereas for another two, it accounted for between fifty and sixty per cent. The remaining HEI was unable to attribute a proportion for which international activity accounted for.

For those HEIs that are currently engaged in an international partnership, key motivations included the funding potential that such partnerships attract; a sense of responsibility in responding to international needs; and a desire to expand knowledge sharing and learning opportunities. However, the main challenges identified centred on logistical issues such as time differences when working internationally and the impact this has on scheduling meetings between stakeholders, as well as the varying levels of development of the social enterprise sector itself across different countries.

⁷ One respondent was unsure how many international activities the HEI had participated in.

“The fiscal scope of international projects is particularly attractive to our HEI”

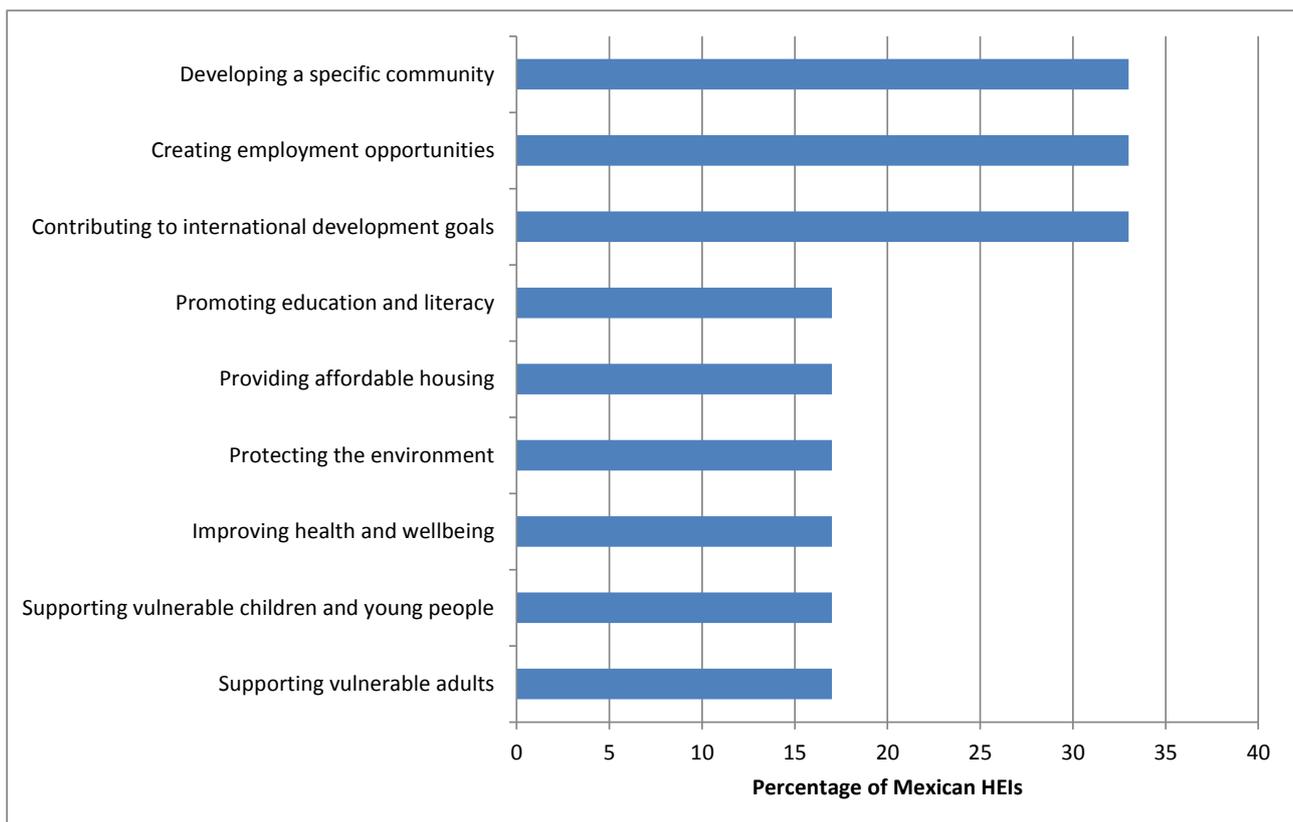
“We are motivated to work internationally because migration is a transnational phenomenon”

“There are many organisations in many parts of the world with years of experience and we know it is very important to identify the success factors and identify possible difficulties and share this knowledge”

Priority areas

Echoing the findings from the global research report, the most commonly cited social purposes that Mexican HEIs would be most likely to support⁸ were those that developed specific communities; create employment opportunities; and contribute to international development goals, as cited by two institutions each (Chart 2). Furthermore, Mexican HEIs identified a number of specific areas they would likely support; namely promoting education and literacy; providing affordable housing; protecting the environment; improving health and wellbeing; and supporting vulnerable adults, children and young people, each of which were reported by one HEI.

Chart 2: Types of social enterprise Mexican HEIs would be most likely to support



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 6

⁸ HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second choice they would be most likely to support.

Motivations for engagement

Partially reflecting the global findings, Mexican institutions outlined a range of motivating factors that underpinned their engagement with social enterprises. Of those providing a response, the majority (5) reported that they would be particularly motivated⁹ to engage with social enterprise if such practices were included in the HEI's mission or strategy. Further, three HEIs stated that they would be encouraged to develop partnerships in order to address national needs. This was followed by a motivation to: improve the student experience; develop research opportunities; address local and regional needs; and include social enterprise as part of the curriculum on some courses, all of which were cited by one HEI. The motivation to engage with SE if it forms part of the HEI's mission or strategy is particularly reflective of the emphasis placed on Mexican HEIs to contribute to societal development within their communities. For example, as noted in 'Case study 1', UPAEP have incorporated the national mandatory service component into their overall strategic approach; embedding social entrepreneurial endeavours into their HEI mission.

"We link to the real needs of different groups or communities and that's part of our philosophy"

"Our HEI has positioned itself to work with social enterprises, promoting high-impact research, not only locally, but nationally as well"

"Students develop and strengthen their entrepreneurial skills through the creation and development of high-impact projects that not only benefit the company but also the community"

"Our social enterprise work creates opportunities and alternatives for economic and social development in the community"

Working with and supporting social enterprise

Mexican HEIs currently working with social enterprise(s) were asked to indicate the ways in which this took place, and to exemplify the associated type of support they provide.

As shown in Table 1, by far the most common approaches were through a project, partnership or joint venture, and through institutional commitment to working with or supporting social enterprises within the HEI's mission or strategy, each of which were cited by seven institutions. This was exemplified by the provision of: a dedicated social enterprise support service, collaboration or research opportunities (7 HEIs); and placement students, as cited by 5 HEIs. A further four HEIs specified that they provided access to facilities, and advertised and purchased social enterprise goods and services.

The second most commonly cited support approach was through institutional membership of a social enterprise network, reported by four Mexican institutions. All of these approaches were in line with the global findings; indeed, with the exception of institutional membership of an SE network, Mexican HEIs exceeded the global average. However, Mexican HEIs were less likely to report facilitating HEI- or staff-led social enterprises, which was only cited by three HEIs, in comparison to 67% globally.

⁹ HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second most motivating factor.

Table 1: Approaches to working with social enterprise¹⁰

Approach	Percentage	
	Mexico	Global
A project, partnership or other joint activity with one or more social enterprise(s)	100%	96%
Institutional commitment to working with/ supporting social enterprises in mission/ strategy	100%	81%
Student-led social enterprises	100%	78%
Incubation space / facility where new social enterprise(s) can develop	100%	68%
Institutional membership of a social enterprise network	67%	70%
HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises	50%	67%

Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

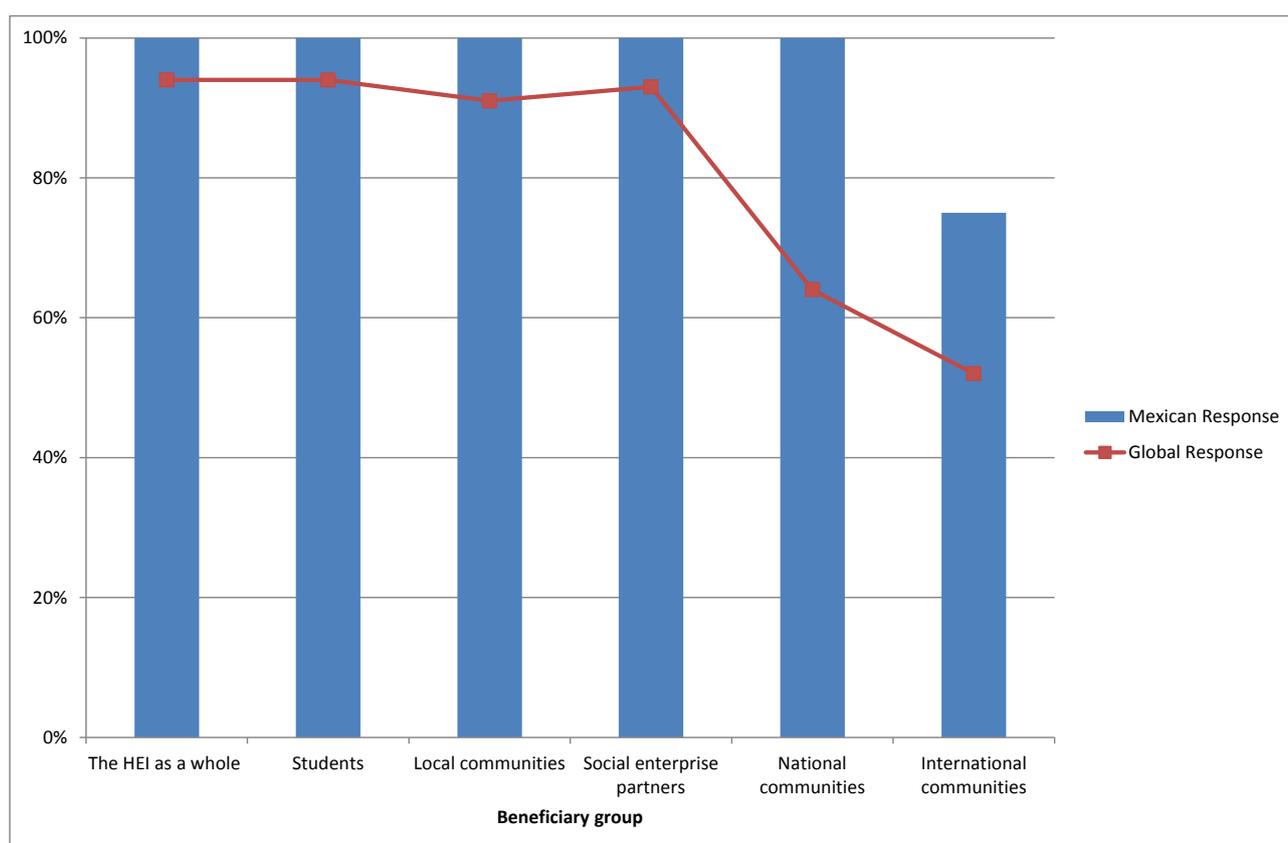
Base: 7 except 'Institutional membership of a social enterprise network' and 'HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises' where B=6; and 'Incubation space / facility where new social enterprise(s) can develop' and 'Student-led social enterprises' where B=5

Benefits of partnership working

Mexican HEIs identified that their work with social enterprise(s) had created benefits for a range of groups. This is presented in Chart 3, and benchmarked against findings from the global research report, indicated by the red trend line.

The perceived levels of benefit amongst Mexican HEIs somewhat echoed global views. Seven institutions identified the HEI as a whole, students, and local communities as the primary beneficiaries of partnership working. This was followed by recognition of benefit for the social enterprise partners, cited by six institutions; generally reflecting the global findings of 94%, 94%, 91%, and 93% respectively. Further, acknowledgement of the advantages of partnership working for both national and international communities was notably higher in Mexico (cited by five and three HEIs respectively) than the global averages of 64% and 52%.

¹⁰ NB: Percentages may vary due to differing base numbers and have been provided so that a global comparison can be made, however caution should be exercised when interpreting this data because of the small sample from Mexico.

Chart 3: Mexican views regarding the key beneficiaries of HEI/SE partnership

Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Mexico Base: 7 except 'Social enterprise partners' where B=6; 'National communities' where B=5; and 'International communities' where B=4

Global Base: 157, except 'Social enterprise partners' where B=156; 'Students' and 'Local communities' where B=155; and 'National communities' and 'International communities' where B=148

Embedding social enterprise in higher education

Somewhat reflecting findings from the eleven other participating countries, all responding Mexican HEIs that had active partnerships at the point of the survey commonly used social enterprise to support the delivery of extracurricular activities (6). Furthermore, six responding institutions indicated that social enterprises were involved in the delivery of curriculum teaching, and in the national social service of their students. In addition, three stated that their HE offered an accredited social enterprise course, and two reported that social enterprise was incorporated across all courses.

Good practice in developing partnerships

Introduction

As noted previously, the research sought, in part, to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange, and to inform further collaboration opportunities (see *'Using this report'*). In support of these objectives, the survey asked HEIs to share examples of good practice stemming from their experience of developing partnerships with social enterprises.

HEIs in Mexico provided some good practice approaches that could be shared more widely, which were broadly categorised as follows: developing cooperative networks; and focusing on impact and sustainability. These are discussed in turn, and exemplified by quotes from responding institutions.

Developing cooperative networks

In common with findings from the global report, HEIs in Mexico highlighted the importance of establishing cooperative networks of organisations to support social enterprise; integrating knowledge and expertise for maximum impact. The survey found that membership of a social enterprise network was a common approach that HEIs reported taking when engaging in SE partnerships and, in particular, institutions reported that such networks are particularly valuable during the SE start-up phase.

"Get support at every stage and work in networks"

"It is important to seek partners such as Ashoka and Hult Prize; organisations who know about social enterprises so they can provide support and guidance and help you create high-impact projects"

"Working with organisations that support social entrepreneurs in the creation, development and strengthening of their social enterprises is crucial"

Focus on impact and sustainability

As identified in the global research report, HEIs in Mexico noted that measuring the impact of a social enterprise is an important step in communicating its value; as well as the added value made by the HEI's contribution. They also supported the need for clear action planning at the outset to identify where the need for support lies and to work towards achieving this systematically.

"It is very important to perform a complete assessment of specific needs and ensure that the assessment is used to plan activity"

"Participating in, and monitoring, initiatives, to understand the impact they have, ensures there is a focus on long-term value"

Summary

The social enterprise sector in Mexico, more commonly known locally as the 'social economy' is relatively well established. In addition, the Mexican higher education system plays a key role in promoting societal change; being one of the few countries to have a mandatory service component for students enrolled in higher education. Further to this, the survey found that social enterprise activity amongst Mexican HEIs was relatively commonplace, with seven out of eight institutions reporting having an active partnership (88%). This is benchmarked against a 75% level of active engagement from across all twelve study countries.

With regard to the geographical scope of engagement, four of the seven Mexican HEIs with an active partnership(s) indicated that this included a partnership within their own country, whilst a larger majority of five stated that their partnership(s) also involved international activity. Underpinning this engagement was a motivation to work with social enterprise if such practices were included in the HEI's mission or strategy and to address national needs. Mexican HEIs also reported how they would be encouraged to work with social enterprise to improve the student experience; develop research opportunities; and address local and regional needs.

Reflecting the desire to address national needs, the most commonly cited social purposes that Mexican HEIs would be most likely to support were the development of specific communities, and the creation of employment opportunities. Institutions also cited how they would particularly support social enterprises that contributed to international development goals.

In terms of the ways in which Mexican HEIs approach their work with social enterprise(s), all seven responding institutions reported that this was through a project, partnership or joint venture, such as the provision of a dedicated SE support service, research opportunities, or placement students; and through institutional commitment to working with and support social enterprises within the HEI's mission or strategy. This was followed by the facilitation of student-led social enterprises, and the provision of incubation space where new social enterprises can develop. All of these approaches were generally in line with the global findings; however, Mexican institutions were less likely to support HEI- or staff-led social enterprises than HEIs globally. The HEI as a whole, students, and local communities were identified by Mexican institutions to be the primary beneficiaries of partnership working, as cited by all seven responding HEIs.

Looking forward, the prevalence and breadth of Mexican HEI/SE partnerships described in this study have illustrated the prominent role that institutions are playing in Mexico in support of the SE sector. Furthermore, the survey highlighted how HEIs can continue to build on their current engagement; for example through staff leading social entrepreneurial initiatives and through incorporating SE across the academic curriculum. With the national mandatory service component already putting Mexican institutions in a unique position to lead community development; there now exists future opportunities to further extend their impact by engaging in more social enterprise partnerships both locally and internationally. Given that this study focused solely on HEI/ SE partnerships in four cities in Mexico, further research is now needed to explore how institutions in other areas of Mexico are supporting the development of the social enterprise sector.

Case studies of practice

Case study 1: Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla

Institution overview:

Founded in 1973, Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP) is a private, Catholic University located in Puebla, Mexico. Established as an alternative to traditional higher education in Mexico, the university's mission involves developing entrepreneurial leaders that transform society. UPAEP has an institutional focus on social and human development, innovation in technology, and contributions to community development. The institution has more than 13,000 current student enrolments.

Approach to social enterprise:

UPAEP has a long-standing relationship with social enterprise and engages in a multi-faceted and varied approach. In 2015, the university became one of the youngest institutions to be awarded Ashoka U Changemaker status in recognition of their commitment to social development and use of innovative methods to address societal issues.

Community development:

In partnerships between the university and other local community partners, UPAEP leads on various local development initiatives. For example, the 'Embark and Grow' programme, led by the Training Institute at UPAEP, provides education and training on sustainable development for women from disadvantaged, rural communities. The women receive in-depth guidance on the particulars of social entrepreneurship and are then supported in developing their own social enterprise. By the end of the programme, women achieve a corporate image for their enterprise, more than one channel of distribution to sell their products and international exposure; as well as the invaluable acquisition of social business skills and knowledge.

Another flagship UPAEP initiative involves improving social conditions and encouraging economic development, progress and well-being for the people of Barrio de Santiago and surrounding areas. The university has helped to improve local inhabitants' quality of life by identifying their needs and facilitating various activities that supports social cohesion; developing initiatives that address social and environmental problems in the area.

Embedding social enterprise in the academic curriculum:

Mexico's mandatory social service component stipulates that all students must complete a certain number of hours in community development endeavours. At UPAEP, the social service component is designed as a real-life social entrepreneurial experience; giving students the opportunity to design, test and launch their own social enterprises in their local community.

Bet for the future:

The 'Bet for the Future' programme, led by UPAEP, promotes community development through comprehensive training of students to become 'young local leaders' who collaborate with social organisations in rural areas. The resulting partnerships strengthen local community organisations and generate capital from members of the rural community. Scholarships are awarded to students from rural and indigenous communities; offering them the opportunity to study at the university and participate in various leadership programmes facilitated by UPAEP; who then in turn support the development of the communities from which they come from.

Contact information: www.upaep.mx

Case study 2: Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey

Institution overview:

Founded in 1943, the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) is a private, multi-campus university based in Monterrey, Mexico. The institute's mission outlines its position as an educator of 'agents of change' who are willing to be "increasingly competitive, for the benefit of all". There are currently between 15,000 and 20,000 students enrolled at the institute, and ITESM has subject specialisms in business, health sciences, bio-technology and food; and engineering.

Approach to social enterprise:

Working with social enterprises forms part of the university's mission and strategy, and social entrepreneurship is incorporated into the curriculum of many of their courses. In addition, ITESM works with external social enterprises, providing them with training, expertise and business support services, as well as through collaborating on various research projects. Furthermore, ITESM is home to the 'Eugenio Garza Lagüera Entrepreneurship Institute' which is the largest entrepreneurship ecosystem in Latin America. Here, students enrolled on the 'Development of Enterprises with Social Impact' course are supported to generate innovative social impact enterprises with business models that are capable of generating revenue, attracting resources and improving the opportunities of the low income population.

Multi-sector collaboration:

In 2013, ITESM created 'INC MTY', an entrepreneurship and innovation festival in which Mexican entrepreneurs, innovators and investors participated. INC MTY has now become one of the most important celebrations of the entrepreneurial spirit within Mexico. Furthermore, ITESM engages with various strategic partners such as Ashoka, Hult Foundation and Socialab through which they are able to strengthen the development of social entrepreneurship in students, thereby providing opportunities to enrich their education.

International engagement:

ITESM is in partnership with the Global Consortium of Babson College, a prominent entrepreneurship-focused university in the US, with the goal to promote an entrepreneurial mentality among the Spanish-speaking populations of the world. ITESM's Entrepreneur Institute has also celebrated successes on a global scale. For example, Ludaby is a student-led enterprise that creates toys to help people with autism develop their learning, communication and adaptability skills, thereby simplifying their inclusion to society. The founders were invited to attend an Ashoka International Exchange Event where student social entrepreneurs share and learn from each other's experiences.

Challenges and future opportunities:

The university identifies that the biggest challenge they have experienced is the lack of legal structure for social enterprise in Mexico. By not having a formal legal status for SE, they note that the process of growth, scalability and replication of SE models becomes slow, adding another layer of complexity in the development of the sector.

For ITESM to increase their level of engagement with social enterprises, they identify several key strands of support needed:

- Funding, to invest in resources for social enterprises;
- Having university programmes for impact development;
- Integrating the public and private ecosystem to create bigger social enterprises; and
- Promoting the sector to boost social entrepreneurship on a national level, raising awareness about what social enterprises do for the country so this can become part of the culture.

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