

Public universities place greater focus on internal research services than private ones do

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Research expenditure has increased in Spain, as has the focus on research performance. However, the internal services that universities provide to support research, both in terms of infrastructure and staff, have not improved, according to a study published in the journal *The Service Industries Journal*, which also shows that public universities outperform private ones in this respect.

"The Ministry of [Science](#) and [Innovation](#) provides Spanish universities with access to databases. However, we have seen that in many cases there are no research support staff to explain how to make good use of these databases. There is no point investing in these resources if these staff are not available", Itxaso del-Palacio, a researcher at Imperial

College London and co-author of the study tells SINC.

The researchers from Imperial College London and the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) analysed the yield of research results and internal services – the libraries, laboratories, infrastructures and support staff – at a sample of 62 Spanish universities (public and private). To do this, they used data from the biannual report Spanish universities in figures ('La universidad española en cifras'), which is published by the Conference of Vice-Chancellors of Spanish Universities (CRUE).

"To start with, we carried out a general analysis of the status of research at all the universities, and then we compared the public ones with the private ones. In this regard, we found that the research results of the private universities to be no better than those of the public ones, as had been suggested by previous studies", del-Palacio explains.

In terms of internal services, both the infrastructures and staff of libraries have a positive impact on research results, measured in terms of publications or private acquisitions of R&D as a result of agreements with companies. "However, we were not able to find any increase in investment designed to improve support infrastructures or services, nor for the commercialisation or dissemination of this knowledge", the expert points out.

Better results at public universities

The study also highlights the fact that public universities place greater priority on their internal research support services, and that this leads to better results than those seen at private universities.

"There could be several reasons for this – greater R&D expenditure by public universities, development of additional services to promote research and technology transfer, as well as other services that aim to

promote the transfer of technology of processes other than those associated with business activity and the university academic sphere", the study points out.

The aim of this study is to encourage universities to improve their library services, laboratory equipment and other infrastructures. "Boosting the internal quality of university services will help to improve research results and consequently will attract talented professors and students from all over the world", the experts conclude.

More information: Itxaso del Palacio, Francesc Sole, Jasmina Berbegal. "Which services support research activities at universities?", *The Service Industries Journal* 31 (1): 39, Jan 2011.

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