

The Need for Entrepreneurial Universities in the Kurdistan Region

Sir,

Universities operate in an ever-changing environment, which is both continuous and rapid. This has increased the levels of uncertainty and, consequently, universities are facing difficult times, especially with regards to the evolution of their responsibilities to meet the needs and expectations of the stakeholders according to the altered business model under which they now must operate. Furthermore, they are expected, perhaps demanded, not only to behave in an entrepreneurial manner but also to put this behavior on display for both the immediate stakeholders and the wider community. What makes this even more complicated is the fact that a consensus on a single definition for entrepreneurship has yet to be reached. Therefore, it can be logically argued that entrepreneurial endeavors are “not an absolute but a continuum” set of behaviors ranging from the Schumpeterian waves of “creative destruction” to the Kirznerian market adjustment.

Formerly, entrepreneurship in universities mostly comprised joint ventures with businesses, commercialization of inventions, and the establishment of incubators. Currently, there is also an internal focus on encouraging and enabling staff and students to be more entrepreneurial. In addition, there is an increasing need for senior staff to exhibit entrepreneurial skills, both in strategy formulation and implementation.

Entrepreneurial universities are business-oriented and innovative universities that develop entrepreneurial opportunities in a way that helps to create value. They pay a great deal of attention to innovations and obtaining and

integrating knowledge and also on sharing it with their wider community. They continuously search for new sources of funding and engage in various entrepreneurial activities, allowing them to build their independence and to also have a positive impact on the regional economy.

What benefits can the universities in the Kurdistan Region gain from being entrepreneurial universities?

The main advantage of adopting an entrepreneurial university model for the universities in the Kurdistan Region will be to help them with the “funding issues” they are currently facing. This model offers the opportunity to find various sources of funding to fund part of their expenditures. This will contribute to an improvement in their performance, especially because the financial allocations from the government are not adequate to cover any additional expenses related to performance-improvement activities. Moreover, the performance of the universities in the Kurdistan Region is affected by the unstable political and economic situation of this region. This instability may cause their performance to be, somewhat, unpredictable. Finding other sources of funding may help them to cope with these issues.

Being an entrepreneurial university can be a reason for enjoying more academic freedom and using the resources in a more efficient, effective, and innovative way, as well as in the generation of new knowledge. Universities in the Kurdistan Region attempt to produce new knowledge through innovative and high-quality research. The latter certainly requires more financial recourses, which are not available in abundance at the moment.

Undoubtedly, having entrepreneurial universities in the Kurdistan Region can contribute substantially to the development of the Kurdish economy and society. This positive impact of the universities can be delivered through several activities and modes, such as establishing new ventures, spin-offs and subsidiaries, supporting and

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developing innovation and a high level of growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, helping businesses to improve their performance, producing entrepreneurs, business people, and high-quality graduates who can contribute to transforming their societies, and employing a considerable number of individuals because of their continuous growth. In addition, engaging fully and working hand-in-hand with the public and the local community by owning and supporting social enterprises, undertaking research that contributes to minimizing the negative impact on the environment, and adding value to society.

Finally, acting according to the principles of entrepreneurial universities may aid in their response to the globalized challenges and allow them to compete with highly prestigious international universities. Recognizing the modes and frameworks related to entrepreneurialism has become easier in the era of the globalization through the internet and advanced information technology. The above can assist the universities in the Kurdistan Region to become prestigious learning institutions.

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