

Entrepreneurial Universities: Emerging Models in the New Social and Economic Landscape

Small Business Economics
Special Issue

Guest Editors:

Alain Fayolle, EM Lyon Business School, France
Maribel Guerrero, Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, Deusto Business School, Spain
Magnus Klofsten, Linköping University, Sweden
Sarfraz Mian, State University of New York, Oswego, NY, USA
David Urbano, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain

Overview

Research University as a source of knowledge (technology) providing innovative contexts:

For neoclassical economists knowledge has been an independent variable in the sense that it is considered external to the economic system; that is, in the production function technical change is taken as the residual that could not be explained directly by the key input factors, capital and labor. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the 1980s most economists started to interpret technology as an endogenous variable to be explained by the economic conditions of production, which for neoclassical thought is already becoming the systematized theory of 'endogenous economic growth' (Corona et al. 2006). Therefore, the endogenous economic growth model introduced a new factor, knowledge (technology), rather than leaving it as an undetermined residual, the 'invisible hand' as had been the case in the Solow's neoclassical model (Romer 1986; Lucas 1988). In this scenario, the role of university has been understood as a provider of knowledge (technology) with its innovative context as an important source of economic growth. As noted by the European Commission, "The fast development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought about deep *changes in our way of working and living*, as the widespread diffusion of ICT is accompanied by organizational, commercial, social and legal innovations.

Following this perspective, the society is identified as the "*Information Society*", a society in which low-cost information and ICT are in general use, or as the "*Knowledge(-based) Society*", to stress the fact that the most valuable asset is investment in intangible, human and social capital and that the key factors are knowledge and creativity." ¹ This new society is characterized by the accelerating pace at which knowledge is created and by the development of knowledge-based communities and regions where networks of researchers produce and exchange new knowledge which is commercialized by entrepreneurs and established firms. Knowledge and innovation are increasingly the key to competitiveness, economic growth and wealth creation in our globalized and competitive world (Mian 2011). The society is challenging the traditional university model and functions with its demands for new professions and qualifications, the increasing variety of people coming to study, the growing complexity and speed of knowledge, and the expectation that universities should contribute both to the generation of knowledge (a traditional function), and to its transfer to the business world for commercialization and the good of society (a new function) (Mian et al. 2012). Under these assumptions, the new knowledge would automatically spillover for commercialization resulting in innovative activity and ultimately economic growth.

Entrepreneurial university as a driver of entrepreneurial contexts:

Audretsch and Keilbach (2004) introduced a new factor, entrepreneurial activity, and link it to output in the context of a production function model. It explains how some contexts generating a high propensity for economic agents to start new firms can be characterized as being rich in entrepreneurial activity, while other contexts, where the startup of new firms is inhibited, can be characterized as being weak in entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurial activity therefore can contribute to output and growth by serving as a conduit for knowledge spillovers, increasing competition, and by injecting diversity. According to OECD, "entrepreneurs are agents of change and growth in a market economy and they can act to accelerate the generation, dissemination and application of innovative ideas... Entrepreneurs not only seek out and identify potentially profitable economic opportunities but are also willing to take risks to see if their hunches are right" (OECD 1998, p. 11). The determinants of entrepreneurship are shaped by a number of forces and factors, including legal and institutional but also

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/knowledge_society/index_en.htm.

social factors as well (Fayolle 2007; Herrmann et al. 2012). Therefore, in an Entrepreneurial Society, institutions are created and modified to facilitate entrepreneurial activity, which serves as the driving force underlying economic growth and prosperity (Audretsch 2007). Thus, universities facilitate the entrepreneurial driven economic growth through an institutional context, which is conducive to entrepreneurial activity. Audretsch (2012) further argues that the role of universities is more than generate technology transfer (patents, spin-offs and start-ups), and rather, contribute and provide leadership for creating entrepreneurial thinking, actions, institutions and entrepreneurial capital. In this sense, a dichotomy emerges for the entrepreneurial university with certain parts of the university contributing as innovation driver while other parts contributing as entrepreneurship driver (Guerrero and Urbano 2013; Svensson et al. 2011).

Entrepreneurial university as a driver of innovation and entrepreneurship: in a new social and economic landscape

For both reasons, this special issue is focused on Entrepreneurial Universities in their regional context and addresses the effectiveness of their innovative entrepreneurial orientation in meeting regional economic and societal needs, in a sustainable way. More concretely, an Entrepreneurial University is considered such as an organization that adopts an entrepreneurial management style, with members (faculty, students, and staff members) who act entrepreneurially, and that interacts with its outside environment (community/region) in an entrepreneurial manner (Clark 2001; Klofsten and Jones-Evans 2000). Traditional studies of entrepreneurial university tend to take a narrow view of industry-university relations focusing on the commercialization of research results and on mechanisms of 'technology transfer' such as science parks and incubators, liaison offices, or intellectual property (O'Shea et al. 2005; Wright et al. 2007; Grimaldi et al. 2011). However, the emerging role of a modern entrepreneurial university is dichotomous, focusing both innovation and entrepreneurship that contributes to innovation, competitiveness and economic growth (Urbano and Guerrero 2013). Indeed, the worldwide economic downturn that began in 2008 represented a strategic game changer for most organizations. Severe resource constraints and unpredictable conditions created significant challenges for organizational survival, let alone growth through innovation and venturing activities. Therefore, in this scenario, the entrepreneurial universities also face strong challenges: higher rates of unemployment, the reduction of education budgets, reduction in the demand of higher education studies, etc.

Based on that, under this new social and economic landscape, the research questions addressed will focus on the role of Entrepreneurial Universities at the regional level and on the way they interact with institutions and other stakeholders in their regions, and on the impact of that interaction on regional innovative and entrepreneurial capacity development leading toward sustained socio-economic well-being. They will lead to analyses at the university level and at the regional level, and to comparative analyses at the national level and at the International level. The goal is to learn from a variety of global Entrepreneurial Universities' cases in varying contexts using different levels of analysis. Suitable research questions for the associated special issue include, but are not limited to:

- What is the role of Entrepreneurial Universities as drivers and/or contributors to innovative and entrepreneurial contexts of development?
- Which of their activities are directly linked to regional/national development?
- What are the best dependent variables/performance metrics to assess Entrepreneurial University outcomes and socio-economic impacts?
- How are Entrepreneurial Universities adapting to meet the demands of the emerging knowledge and entrepreneurial society?
- How entrepreneurial universities' actions or strategies adapt to new challenges presented by heightened environmental turmoil?
- What is the role of leadership and governance in order to develop an entrepreneurial culture in the university?
- What are the environmental factors (i.e., formal: policies, incentives & informal: attitudes, culture) and internal factors (i.e., resources and capabilities), that affects the development of Entrepreneurial Universities in the new social and economic landscape?
- What is the most effective mix of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in an Entrepreneurial University to meet societal needs and for positive regional impact?
- What is the relationship between research and teaching at Entrepreneurial Universities, including adaptation of curricula in degree programs and in continuing education to include new knowledge and meet regional needs? How is it done? What is its impact on regional innovation?
- How can the effectiveness of the mechanisms employed by Entrepreneurial Universities in regional development (tech transfer, incubation etc) be measured? How can that effectiveness be benchmarked?
- Are faculty's university-industry engagements mechanisms are more effective than traditional commercialization support mechanisms?

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Submission Guidelines

- Potential contributors are encouraged to **submit abstracts** of three to five pages in length via e-mail **to the guest editors**. The deadline for submission of abstracts is **December 1st, 2014** and the expected abstract decision will be on **January 15th, 2015**.
- **Accepted abstracts** should be invited to submit full manuscripts **by May 15th, 2015** via e-mail to the guest editors. Authors should follow the Information for Contributors of Manuscripts as published in the *Small Business Economics Journal*.
- All papers will be subject to the journal's normal **double-blind review process**. The first round of review will be during **May 15th to July 15th, 2015** and the expected full paper decision will be on **July 30th, 2015**.
- The **expected date of publication** is **end of 2016**.

If you have any questions about the special issue, please contact Alain Fayolle (fayolle@em-lyon.com), Maribel Guerrero (maribel.guerrero@orquestra.deusto.es), Magnus Klofsten (magnus.klofsten@liu.se), Sarfraz Mian (Sarfraz.mian@oswego.edu) and David Urbano (david.urbano@uab.cat).



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