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Journal of High Technology Management Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/hitech

Impact of the qualities of the manager and type of university on the development of the entrepreneurial university

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Qualities of the manager
Type of university
Entrepreneurial university

ABSTRACT

This paper sheds light on the importance of the evolution of the university towards an entrepreneurial one. To clarify the specific characteristics allowing the university to become entrepreneurial, we conducted a quantitative study on 120 heads of Tunisian universities. Our results show that for a university to become an entrepreneur, it has to undergo internal transformations. In this sense, the role of the manager and the university type has a positive impact on the development of an entrepreneurial university. Therefore, the proposed conceptual model can serve as a reference or a starting point for further research aimed at studying the entrepreneurial university.

1. Introduction

In order to contribute fully to the revitalization and socio-economic development of the community and the country in question, universities seek to further develop themselves. Faced with a turbulent environment, universities are required to raise the major challenges and achieve the already set objectives. They are expected to provide good academic training, develop skills, and contribute to edify society, enrich knowledge, develop technology and bring it to the benefit of the community through establishing or even strengthening an effective partnership between the academic world and the productive one.

The university must work to become a real engine of society in all fields; it should be fully involved in national and regional development of efforts, which requires the opening of the university on its environment, establishing a university business dialogue, listening in general and proximity in particular not only to be able to meet their expectations, their needs, and also to address their shortcomings.

It is now generally accepted that universities are an important instrument in facilitating the knowledge-based economy. Universities and research institutions, where much knowledge is developed, are seen as important catalysts for economic and social development through the spin-off of new innovative firms that add value through knowledge creation. This is why governments around the world are trying to create more entrepreneurial universities. Higher education institutions are increasingly called upon to operate more in a spirit-like enterprise, to commercialize the results of their research, and to create new knowledge-based enterprises. According to [Etzkowitz \(1998, 2003 and 2004\)](#), universities are currently the subject of a “second revolution”, integrating economic and social development into their mission. The new entrepreneurial university integrates economic development as an additional function ([Etzkowitz, 1993; Laukkanen, 2000; Ropke, 1998](#)). In this sense, public administrations and other institutions have begun to put in place support measures to create entrepreneurial environments at the university level and to motivate interaction between

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hitech.2018.04.003>

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them and universities.

An entrepreneurial society refers to the area where both knowledge about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit have emerged as a driving force for economic growth, competitiveness and job creation. In this context, we find that entrepreneurial universities play an essential role as producers of knowledge. It should be noted that each author tries to propose a “recipe” for the creation and development of an entrepreneurial university by presenting a set of ingredients to realize it. Moreover, as [Zaharia and Gibert \(2005\)](#) emphasize, “the process of entrepreneurial transformation is long and varies from one university to another as it is influenced by traditions, economic development, cultural factors and legislative frameworks”.

Moreover, [Clark \(2001\)](#) considers that the creation of an entrepreneurial university “*is not a stage that can be passed through once and forever. It is a process without end. Its creation is likely to happen not as a big bang, but in an incremental, evolutionary fashion, as a flexible organizational character that can adjust and readjust with better responses to rapidly changing demands*”.

[Rajhi \(2014\)](#) argued in her qualitative study that the university is led to carry out internal transformations so as to become entrepreneurial. Similarly, [Gibb \(2001\)](#) advocates the need to identify stages of transformations within the university. According to her, it is not a matter of focusing only on “small changes” in teaching and research programs but also on changes in the structure, organization and culture of the university. To this end, several universities have turned to entrepreneurial practices.

According to [Kwiek \(2001\)](#), the university transformation seems inevitable for both developed and developing countries. Nevertheless, this field of study remains underdeveloped because the majority of studies have followed other approaches such as academic capitalism, commercialization of knowledge without taking into account the specific characteristics of the entrepreneurial university.

Then, a proper identification of the specific characteristics of the entrepreneurial university (role of managers and the type of the university) becomes crucial because an entrepreneurial university needs to design and implement better characteristics allowing for an entrepreneurial orientation. Thus, the analysis of the impact of the university's own characteristics on the development of the entrepreneurial university becomes a topical subject.

Therefore, the main question of this research paper is formulated as follows: what are the specific characteristics that have been adopted towards an entrepreneurial university?

To our knowledge, we believe that [Rajhi \(2014\)](#), using a qualitative study, was the first who investigated the role of the supervisor and the type of university in the field of university research.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the current investigation is the first quantitative study that attempts to highlight the interrelations between the qualities of the manager and the type of university that condition the development of entrepreneurial universities with teaching, research and the entrepreneurial missions that they need to achieve. The contribution of this study can also be seen through the development of a conceptual model, showing the importance of these factors in the development of an entrepreneurial university, the accumulation and development of knowledge clarifying this phenomenon, and better position researchers in the field of entrepreneurship. Then, the originality of our study stems from the fact that it seeks to refine this conceptual model by a quantitative survey with the heads of Tunisian universities. The conceptual model that we have proposed can be used as a tool available to those leaders for initiating and implementing a policy for the creation and development of entrepreneurial universities.

Our work is divided into four parts. We present in the first section a review of the literature and the development of hypotheses, the second section focuses on the presentation of the conceptual model, variables, data and methodology. The third section is devoted to test the validity of hypotheses test. Finally, the concern of the last section is to interpret and discuss the results.

2. Review of the literature and development of hypotheses

In the light of the literature review on the entrepreneurial university, we note that authors do not agree on one way to create or develop an entrepreneurial university. Indeed, we have chosen the variables explaining why some universities become entrepreneurial than the others. These variables are dealt with under the following headings: role of the supervisor and type of university.

2.1. Role of the leader

Any university requires managers with specific personal characteristics, in different full-time positions, to fulfill its mission. The university manager is the key position in the university. In this context, [Rajhi \(2014\)](#), in her work “Conceptualization of entrepreneurial spirit and identification of the factors of its development at university” has enriched the conceptual model by adding new variables, namely the importance of the role of the manager in the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit in the university. The results of her case study revealed that 83.3% of the respondents believe that the role of the leader is extremely crucial.

Indeed, she concluded that “to help develop entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit, the manager must have several qualities, namely initiative, perseverance, volunteerism and vision”. She also thinks that the combination of these manager's qualities reflects the entrepreneur's profile. According to her qualitative exploratory survey by means of semi-directive interviews with Tunisian university officials, Nadia. R concludes that “the head of the university must be himself an entrepreneur”. In the same vein, [Gasse \(2009\)](#) emphasizes that “the ideal would be to bring the leaders of the university structures to behave like entrepreneurs, that is to say, capable of defining, realizing visions and building a dynamic and efficient relational and organizational system”.

Similarly, [Miles \(2003\)](#) developed a scale to measure entrepreneurial dimensions in business schools. He suggests the role of the

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