

Public Sector Universities and Performance in the 21st Century: Underlining High Time for Entrepreneurship in the Higher Education Sector

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This paper talks about one of the crucial and critical components of the 21st century, entrepreneurship. This paper discusses the significance of entrepreneurship and how the different facets of entrepreneurship can be taken into consideration for boosting organizational performance, particularly across public universities. This paper also sheds light on the concept of public entrepreneurship and the factors to enhance organizational performance in the higher education sector for government run entities. This paper pays attention to, with a critical appraisal on, these two concepts, to educate organizational scholars on learning the role and impact of these entities on university performance. Accordingly, with the thorough appreciation of the literature on these elements, the paper also seeks to encourage scholars to shed empirical light on the concepts and underline mature results for theory and practice.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship, organizational performance, public entrepreneurship, business.*

Introduction of Entrepreneurship

Casson (2005) states that entrepreneurship is a flourishing field of study. Among those who wrote about entrepreneurship, one of the earliest was Richard Cantillon (1755) – a predecessor of Adam Smith. After him, there have been many others who have written on entrepreneurship, including Frank Knight (1921). During the 1970s, when the Asian “Tiger” economies entered the markets of the west with manufactured goods that were of a good quality but at very low prices, one begins to notice that the entrepreneurship literature makes a shift towards the modern trend of entrepreneurship. Firms which were the “National champions” in Europe and North America were inclined to “downsize” by dropping off some manual workers as well as professionals and managers. Workers who were skilled started their own businesses, thus, creating jobs for themselves. The financial benefits of large firms were recognized by governments very quickly, and governments started giving more support to large firms in comparison with small firms (Sternberg, 2014). Keeping in view the monetary aspect of the firms, governments switched their interest from the small to large industries. Richard Branson, an “entrepreneur” in the UK, and many others like him were recognized and honoured as cultural heroes. Entrepreneurs have made their own culture of starting their own business, and getting themselves employed, and that is why they were regarded as the cultural heroes. Birch (1979) examined the number of new jobs that were created due to new firms in the United States. Increases in VAT registrations, showed an increase in self-employment in Europe but it was observed that many new businesses did not expand, rather they remained as small as they initially were. This was because there were no European companies such as Microsoft that would make things faster and more convenient.

According to Rusu, Isac, Cureteanu and Csorba (2012) special attention is given to the field of entrepreneurship. Despite a sizeable literature on the topic, the meaning of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur remains troublesome, but for economic development, its importance was agreed (Nagy et al., 2010; Koç & Dündar, 2018).

It has been observed that in different time periods different experts have attempted to define entrepreneurship. According to Cole (1968), an activity that initiates, maintains and develops a profit-oriented business is termed as entrepreneurship. Toninelli and Vasta (2014) elaborate entrepreneurship as any act with the ability to produce wealth. Gümüşay (2015) defined entrepreneurship as the process of development of something new and different with a significant value by investing effort and time, keeping in mind the social, financial and physical risks involved and later getting financial rewards and one’s own satisfaction.

Hassani and Khouni (2013) define entrepreneurship as a key competence for all and as the capability of an individual to turn ideas into actions. Furthermore, Shane (2012), defined entrepreneur as a person that makes new combinations by discontinuity. The product, or its’

quality, may be included in the combination of new products as well as finding sources of raw materials and reorganizing that the industry is also included in it. Later, keeping this view of entrepreneurship, Abu-Saifan (2012) defined an entrepreneur as a person who purchases things at a certain price but sells them on an uncertain price.

A person owning all essential resources for the production and launch of a product that replies to the deficiency of market is called an entrepreneur. Wichter and Stokes, (2015) defined an entrepreneur as a person who can see the presence of opportunities that provide existence and takes initiatives for the completion of current needs that are not satisfied.

Facets of Entrepreneurship

A majority of authors acknowledge that the term ‘entrepreneurship’ is multi-faceted and propose more comprehensive definitions, combining opportunity, recognition and exploitation with individual motivation and resource availability (Erikson, 2001). Alegre and Berbegal-Mirabent (2015) state that the domain of entrepreneurship can evidently be witnessed to have received tremendous scholarly appreciation over the past 20 years. Therein, studies have worked to explore the different characteristics, factors and condition-based prospects that could help to boost entrepreneurship oxygen in any given community. In particular, studies have reported individual factors such as motivation, locus of control, culture, individual creativity quotient, economic wellbeing of the country of living and region in general, and industry situation to have a major impact on entrepreneurship (Röschenthaler & Schulz, 2015). The above discussion details out the several perspectives of entrepreneurship which can be found throughout the academic debate. Each perspective assists society in its own way. Some of the major perspective of entrepreneurship are as follows:

Social Perspective

Joseph Schumpeter, according to Swedberg (2006), was the one to argue that entrepreneurship is related to ‘all social phenomena’, although in the field of entrepreneurship, this relationship was not accepted for a long time (Steyart, 2005). The concept of social entrepreneurship has sought to consolidate itself through a fusion of the principles of governance of non-profit organizations and the business tools and ideas from the management, business and economics spheres (Parente, Santos, Marcos, Costa & Veloso, 2012). Entrepreneurial initiatives can be aimed at just creating an enterprise, however, they can also encompass creation of social impacts through a project not necessarily in the area of business. These notions have been described respectively as ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘social entrepreneurship’. Development and implementation of initiatives was taken by entrepreneurship through which social change is influenced (Beckmann, & Zeyen, 2014). In general society, they are the agents of change by “adopting a mission to create and sustain

social value, recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission; engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning; acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand; and exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created”. There are several social factors that affect entrepreneurship and in turn are affected by development of entrepreneurship (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2015).

Economic Perspective

Pertaining to economics, it has been empirically proven that entrepreneurship makes a notable impact on the economic condition of any state through various means including financial flow, employment, innovation, creativity and much more (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2015). The definition of entrepreneur as business-founder undermines the notion that entrepreneurs are a major source behind economic growth (Gorkan, 2014). Entrepreneurship and enterprise are often created within the boundary of a political agenda in regard to economic prosperity and growth (Mallet & Wapshott, 2015). Moreover, they confirmed the suggestion of the theory of Casson that “entrepreneurship is a scarce resource that allows other resources, such as land, labor and capital, to be put to better use, presenting entrepreneurs as those capable of displaying ‘good judgment that improves the quality of business decision-making’” (p. 3) and “if societies want to overcome problems such as global inequality and poverty then part of the answer, if it can be made politically feasible, is the adoption of enhanced incentives for domestic enterprise” (p. 6). Entrepreneurship helps the renewal of the economy of a country, as young and fresh entrepreneurs offer energy, vivacity, innovative services/products and thus, they increase the possibility for societal and social advancement (Hassani & Khouni, 2013; Kögce & Aslandag, 2018).

Looking back carefully into the past few decades, one would observe that there was a series of global universal instabilities resulting in the loss of many jobs, as well as several industries, in countries that had gone through a policy of cost reduction by cutting public jobs (Nasrabadi, et al., 2012). In these situations, entrepreneurship helps in curing the economy and assists in revival as it provides an opportunity for employment (self-employment), hence giving way to the revival of the economy (Ibrahim & Galt, 2011).

The discussion above clearly indicates the importance and multifaceted nature of entrepreneurship. The review also indicates that entrepreneurship can help businesses to attain social as well as economic goals. Notably, it also indicates that regardless of the nature of a business i.e. profit based or not for profit; entrepreneurship can be of great value. Institutions as well as corporate enterprises can bring about a major performance boost to their organizations through indulging in entrepreneurial activities.

Entrepreneurial Organisation

According to management theorist Mintzberg (1973), business enterprises can be structured in the following fashions: entrepreneurial organisation, bureaucracy, professional organisation, divisional organization and innovative organization. Compared to divisional organizations, whose business processes are segmented into highly diversified departments, entrepreneurial organizations are generally flexible in structure. Entrepreneurial organizations are a simple organizational form that typically includes one large operational unit, with one or a few individuals in top management. Similarly, entrepreneurial organizations take higher risks as compared to traditional organisations and they are always proactively struggling to search for new and innovative business ideas and opportunities (Mintzberg, 1973). Generally, entrepreneurial organisations emphasize innovation in products and services. Such types of organizations are regarded as having “a willingness to innovate boldly and regularly while taking considerable risks in their product-market strategies” (Miller & Friesen, 1982, p.5).

The study of entrepreneurial management emphasizes the development and search for opportunity for innovation in products. The management field identifies entrepreneurship as a feature rather than a holistic organization-wide process that encourages pro-activeness, risk taking and innovation (Miller & Friesen, 1982). The process of entrepreneurship is associated with functions and activities of developing opportunities. Bridge and O'Neill, (2012) declared that there exists three different behaviours of entrepreneurial organizations: “being proactive in gaining intelligence on customers and competitors; being innovative by reconfiguring resources to arrange strategic responses; and being involved in some degree of risk and uncertainty.” Varying business environments, decision making processes and organizational changes are also crucial elements of the process of entrepreneurship. Both external and internal factors are included in the changing business environment. Formalization, decentralization and inter-functional-coordination are some of the elements of the internal environment. On the other hand, the external environment comprises a number of forces involving both opportunities and threats. Moreover, the author has also stated that entrepreneurial organizations have to face a continuous flow of decisions of a complex nature. Decision-making at the organizational level is not an easy and simple task, rather it is a multi-phase and multi-criteria process for disclosing or predicting expectations about future opportunities and risks.

Volery, Mueller and von Siemens (2015) developed a connection between the concept of entrepreneurship and the behaviour of orientation within firms. Financial performance and survival of firms are the firm-level features. The entrepreneurial behaviour of the organizations is critical for developing and re-defining the process of entrepreneurship. The systems, structures, and cultures of organizations can be transformed to improve the entrepreneurial effectiveness of organizations.

According to Hassani and Khouni (2013), one of the major aspirations of a civilized society is the harmonious integration of young people with innovative ideas into the mainstream of business activity for the whole of society. The aspirations, enthusiasm, knowledge, energy and skills of entrepreneurs are included among the list of assets a country possesses. The entrepreneurial future is determined mainly by the young, energetic and innovative people, due to the fact that they signify the strength and power required for the navigation and management of the fast changes in the business environment and they also represent the future-capacity and strength for economic growth of an economy. These assets have the potential to boost development activities for the economy as a whole. Organizational performance is a tool usually used to measure entrepreneurial effectiveness at the organization level and the main dimensions of entrepreneurial effectiveness can be best predicted by organizational performance (Bakytgul, Ahmed & Kim, 2019; Hassani & Khouni, 2013). Porter (1980) discovered the impact of the growth of the industry, and the strategic breadth of the firm, on new venture performance. The significance of entrepreneurship, to the strategy of the organization, is that it helps and enables the organization to extend boundaries, capacities and capabilities. Critical review at this point underlines that organizations with entrepreneurial mindsets are more proactive in nature and risk taking. This leads them towards attaining better performance results and competitive advantages. It also helps to understand that organizational entrepreneurial capabilities can be of great value for businesses to bring innovation and learning capabilities across the entire organization, which as a result, provides a robust platform for organizational strategic success.

Public Entrepreneurship

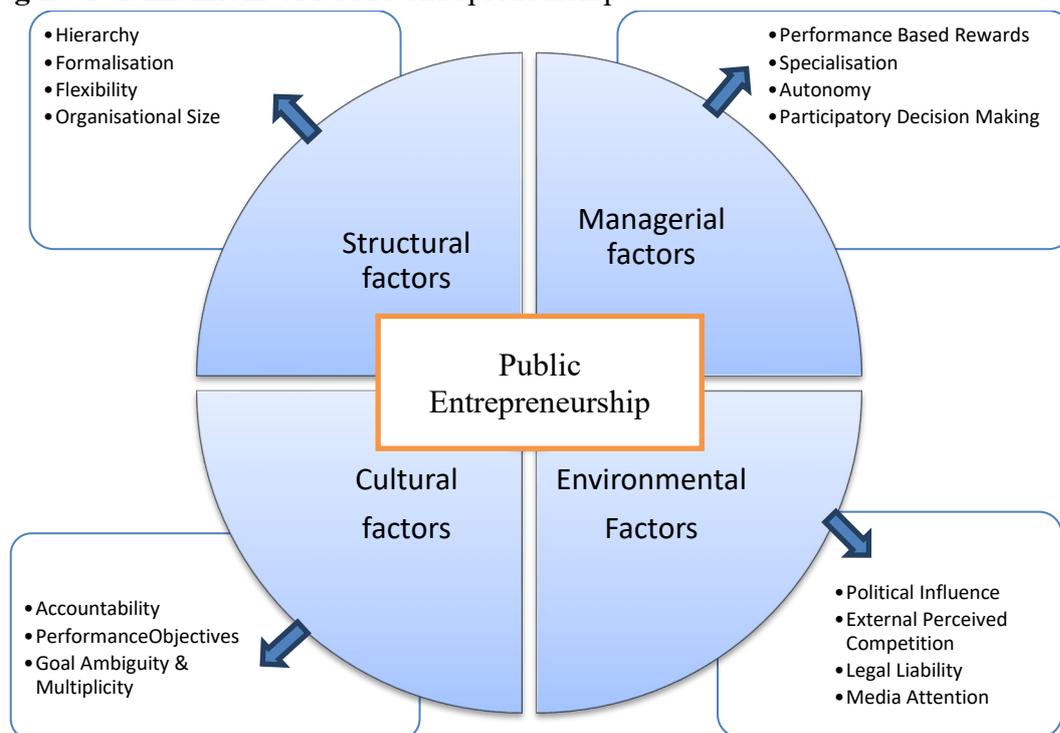
Public sector organisations have also been taking advantage of alternative approaches to entrepreneurial activities. Globally, governments have also been promoting the entrepreneurial ecosystem, as economic policies in recent years indicate (Barnes & Hoang, 2015). Privatization of different government functions has been a part of plans to ensure best quality, rather than putting efforts on the collection of the means of productions; these privatised functions are varied in nature, such as: infrastructure development; technological instalments or even operation of health systems in prisons (Engel et al., 2006). This shows that government institutions are also turning to entrepreneurship to bring transformation in the public sector.

Public entrepreneurship can also be regarded as the creation of public sector goods and services which not only can fulfil market demand to the satisfaction level of consumers but can also create harmony between the market and government (Foss & Foss, 2005).

Organisation-driven public entrepreneurship focuses on the development of entrepreneurial activities and improvement in risk-taking, innovativeness, and pro-activeness (Mas-Tur & Moya, 2015). Entrepreneurial government means being output-focused, encouraging competition, promoting participatory decision-making, and measuring performance (Kim, 2013). Despite active discussions on the characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation in the public sector, the factors that determine public entrepreneurship have been less empirically researched in an organisational setting. Kim (2005) has identified factors that can help to assess the extent and level of an organization being entrepreneurial. They are, structural, managerial, cultural, and environmental. The current study has examined these factors to assess the extent to which public sector universities are entrepreneurial in terms of these four factors.

Figure 3.1 presents all variables of the public entrepreneurship model.

Figure 1. Dimensions of Public entrepreneurship



Structural Factors

For the purpose of encouraging entrepreneurial prosperity, organizational culture plays a vital role especially for the public entities. Researchers defined it as the initialization for the maintenance of an institution's distinctiveness.

Managerial Factors

Researchers have defined it as the transformation of identity into function with the incorporation of organizational tasks with the purpose that actions of institutions must fit with distinctiveness (Dick & Metcalfe, 2001).

Cultural Factors

Culture in an entrepreneurial organization is important as it delivers maintenance, development and understanding of an organization.

Environmental Factors

Direct implications of environmental factors have been identified by previous researchers for exploring entrepreneurial opportunities and their impact (Davidsson, Low, & Wright, 2001).

Entrepreneurship in Public Sector Organization

Entrepreneurial firms play a significant and vital role in innovations that in turn lead to technological change and increased productivity (Hassani & Khouni, 2013). Therefore, governments are increasingly viewing entrepreneurship as an approach for the growth of national assets, for increasing the wealth of the economy, and even to exert political effects on the world stage. Even the public sectors views entrepreneurship as a means to become more efficient and effective. However, entrepreneurship has been related to the public sector in different ways (Gawell, 2014).

These changes have forced public sector organizations to renew and re-evaluate their activities. In practice, the changes result in an opening up of public sector activities towards more markets, and the use of more customer oriented concepts as well as accountability and efficiency. Public sector organizations have started to prefer smaller unit sizes due to increasing demands on accountability. The production of several types of public services are no longer a monopoly of any public sector organizations.

A growing number of public sector organizations are now reaching out for good ideas from around the world for new ways to deliver public services. Instead of innovating all by themselves, these agencies attempt to make the greatest use of external knowledge sources to add public value. As a result, there has been widespread restructuring of organisational firms within the public sector (Lee, Hwang & Choi, 2012). Yazdanshenas (2014) mentioned that traditional approaches are no longer efficient and that bureaucracies have faced pressures and requirements, which make change, transformation, creativity, invention, and innovation

inevitable. In response to these necessities and forces, widespread changes have been introduced in public sector management, often in order to make it more effective and efficient.

The most recent literature on entrepreneurship reveals a variety of drives, practices and approaches (Ahlstrom, Bruton & Li, 2013). Entrepreneurship is also related to different dynamic aspects of the public sector (Klein et al., 2013). In this way, new activities or new ways of organizing the public sector are also seen as being entrepreneurial in approach. This leads to the need for creating entrepreneurial spirit amongst the public sector, which is an essential part of fostering organizational growth. It is becoming evident that similar to private enterprises, the public sector can also boost capabilities and performance by indulging in entrepreneurial activities. The literature seems to be motivating public sector organizations to engage in transformation as well as creativity and innovation based activities to become truly entrepreneurial.

Entrepreneurship can be identified as a dynamic process that needs specific skills, expertise and knowledge (Hassani & Khouni, 2013). As far as the education of entrepreneurship is concerned, it consists of all actions and activities that aim to develop and nurture entrepreneurial attitudes, mindsets and abilities and it covers a wide range of features and dimension like the generation of ideas, starting-up a business, development of a business and innovation in products and services (Fayolle, 2009). The education of entrepreneurship was initiated by “Shigeru Fiji”, who introduced entrepreneurial teaching in 1938 at Kobe University in Japan. Then in 1940s, courses related to the management of small business emerged and in 1947 Myles Mace introduced the first ever course in entrepreneurship, at the Harvard Business School. After almost half a century, this phenomenon extended further to universal recognition (Alberti et al., 2004). In general, the purpose of entrepreneurship education is to increase the awareness of entrepreneurship as a career path and to enhance the comprehension of the processes involved in the establishment and management of an entirely new business enterprise (Lee & Wong, 2013). Hassani and Khouni (2013) argued that entrepreneurship education has a greater focus than merely starting a new business. This education should include finding the right, creative, risk-taking, innovative, people who can accept change with an open mind and heart and who may be successful in all endeavours of life. Moreover, the entrepreneurship education is a precondition and basic requirement for economic development of a country, where entrepreneurs are the change leaders and the renewers of economic structures.

Organisational Performance

It is evident that organizations are affected by the changes and evolution surrounding the global economy. In order to be sustainable in a volatile environment, organizations need to be able to address, face and adapt to changes. When faced with precarious and unstable situations, it is the management of the enterprise that is held accountable because the capability to offset the adverse impacts of crises lays in the hands of management (Majid & Mahmud, 2019; Boxall, Guthrie & Paauwe, 2016).

It is critically to be able to identify and measure the factors contributing to success, especially when faced with economic and financial crises. Performance indicators are used to measure the quality of organisational processes. In addition, performance indicators also act as a sustenance support to achieve organisational goals based on a predetermined budget. To effectively apply the processes, the full potential of performance indicators must be first realised and recognised. In the course of identifying the most appropriate approach to measure organisational performance, the relationship between the impact of the performance measurement process and organisational performance has been extensively studied (Gavrea, Ilies & Stegorean, 2011). The study conducted by Bourne et al. (2005) has validated a positive result between the performance measurement process and business success.

In profit making corporations, firm performance is the capacity of a venture to achieve destinations like high revenue, quality services, huge market share and great monetary outcomes (Koontz and Donnell, 1993). Performance of a firm can likewise be utilized to assess how a venture is getting along in terms of monetary benefit, share of the overall industry and goods quality in connection to different ventures in the same business (Carlos et al., 2014). Therefore, it reflects the efficiency of members of a venture, estimated in terms of expansion, development, growth, profit and revenue of the business (Obiwuru Timothy, Okwu, Akpa & Nwankwere, 2011). However, in public organisations, organisational performance is not related to financial returns as it refers to the ability of organisations to meet organisational goals and demands from their environments (Selden & Sowa, 2004).

Adams, Muir and Hoque (2014) studied public sector performance and defined it as value creation for external and internal stakeholders. Wang (2008) studied entrepreneurial factors in the context of HEIs and how the external environment can affect performance. Public entrepreneurship also has a direct positive relationship with organisational performance (Sambrook & Roberts, 2005). Researchers believe that entrepreneurship at the organisational level can improve performance. Previous researches have adumbrated that organisations benefit from their capacity for risk-taking and their adoption of new ideas and trends (McKinley, Latham & Braun, 2014).

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