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Entrepreneurship Intentions of Public Universities in Turkey: Going Beyond Education and Research?

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Abstract

Today, universities play a fundamental role in establishing and developing an entrepreneurship-oriented economy as they represent the main source of new knowledge. Roles of universities in economic growth have evolved in time and grew beyond their traditional teaching and research tasks. Universities are anymore expected to introduce solutions to social and industrial needs by exploiting the knowledge that is created by research. Universities even strategically aim to create wealth by investing in business, by building linkages, partnerships with technological enterprises or by creating new firms through academic entrepreneurship. Evolution of roles of universities in economic growth received close attention of scholars and found place in multiple disciplines like business management and economics literature and research for decades in developed countries. However there is still a significant need for research about the entrepreneurial intentions, activities and contributions of universities to economic growth in developing countries. Findings of this sort of studies can be very helpful to policy makers of these countries in academy, industry and government for utilizing entrepreneurship for economic growth, employment and increasing welfare of their people. In this context, study aims to determine the entrepreneurial intentions of public universities in Turkey by exploring their strategic postures, cultural and organizational units that supplement and support entrepreneurial activities and collaborations. Major characteristics of universities that determine their entrepreneurial intentions are derived from theoretical background. By conducting a qualitative content analysis, these characteristics are searched through Web sites of public universities in Turkey in academic year of 2011-2012. Findings regarding entrepreneurial intentions of universities that are reflected in their strategies, culture, institutional infrastructure, collaborations/partnerships can provide evidence about not only current but also potential entrepreneurial behaviors of public universities in Turkey.

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1. Introduction

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Entrepreneurship is considered to be a core competence for growth, employment and personal fulfillment (EC, 2004, 2006a). Besides governments and industry, higher education institutions play a fundamental role in establishing and developing an entrepreneurship-oriented economy as these institutions represent a main source of new knowledge and hold a constantly regenerating stock of students and scientists (Lautenschläger and Haase, 2011). Roles of universities in economic growth through contributing to creation of entrepreneurship climate in a country have evolved in time and grew beyond being just educators and disseminating the existing knowledge. Universities naturally generate new ideas, to contribute to innovation by creating knowledge and developing technology as an output of their research activities. However, today to overcome the challenges that the financial crisis brought, mission of universities evolved beyond their traditional roles. Teaching entrepreneurship and innovation in higher education should stay as the basic step, but besides for supporting theoretical learning with tailor-made practices, building links, creating projects in collaboration with regional industry would highly serve to creation of required human resources and knowledge for raising regional entrepreneurship capacity (Binks et al., 2006). Besides, universities are anymore expected both to introduce solutions to social and industrial needs and exploit the knowledge that is created by research. This new mission includes improving wealth by investing in business, by building linkages, partnerships with technological enterprises or by establishing new firms through academic entrepreneurship. Evolution of roles of universities in economic growth received close attention of scholars and found place in multiple disciplines like business management and economics literature and research for decades in developed countries. However there is still a significant need for up-to-date and multidimensional research and studies about the entrepreneurial intentions, activities and contributions of universities to economic growth in developing countries. Findings of this sort of studies can be very helpful to policy makers of these countries in academy, industry and government for utilizing entrepreneurship for economic growth, employment and increasing welfare of their people. In this context, study aims to determine the entrepreneurial intentions of public universities in Turkey by exploring their strategic postures, cultural and organizational units that supplement and support entrepreneurial activities and collaborations. These characteristics of the universities are critically important as they provide a knowledge and practice basis for performing and supporting entrepreneurial activities. Major characteristics of universities that determine their entrepreneurial intentions are derived from theoretical background. By conducting a qualitative content analysis, these characteristics are searched through Web sites of public universities in Turkey in academic year of 2010-2011. Findings regarding entrepreneurial intentions of universities that are reflected in their strategies, culture, institutional infrastructure, collaborations/partnerships can provide evidence about not only current but also potential entrepreneurial behaviors of public universities in Turkey.

In the second section theoretical background and literature review of entrepreneurship and dimensions of entrepreneurship intentions of Universities are presented. Third section covers method and research details of the study and then presents the data analysis and hypothesis tests. Finally, results of the analysis and findings are discussed in conclusion section together with recommendations for further studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a transforming process from an innovative idea to an enterprise, as well as from an enterprise to creation of value (Kauffman, 2008; Bilic et al., 2011) Entrepreneurship has been discussed as the most effective economical power in the global economics and social history (Kuratko, 2005). It is assumed that the effects of entrepreneurial activities are beneficial in several respects. As Lautenschläger and Haase (2011) summarized by quoting from various researchers;

- New businesses have a strong impact on job creation, which is a fundamental goal of macroeconomic policies, (Autio & Parhankangas, 1998; Fölster, 2000),
- New venture creation ensures the economy's welfare, efficiency and productivity (Baumol, 1990),
- New firms act as a major engine for promoting innovation, realizing business ideas, and changing economic structures (Acs, 1996; Audretsch, et al, 2002, Fritsch, 2008).

As a result, entrepreneurship is accepted as 'an important and relevant field of study (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). Several tributaries of thought propose that entrepreneurship, as the promoter of economic development, is rooted in particular cultural beliefs, and behaviors (Ondracek et al, 2011; Higgins, 1961; EC, 2004, 2006a). The European Community's Lisbon Strategy targeted entrepreneurship and innovation to foster economic dynamism through creating more and better jobs (Kailer, 2009). EU's enterprise policy considers entrepreneurship as a core competence for growth, employment and personal fulfillment (EC, 2004, 2006a).

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