Entrepreneurial university: One more door in the intricate innovation maze

Purpose - The purpose of this study is to explore the role of the university in innovation from the perspective of entrepreneurship and innovation systems in order to identify aspects of strategic relevance to the policy and decision-making in the area. The efficacy of innovation systems theory as an analytical framework is also discussed.

Design/methodology/approach - The role of university in innovation is investigated from the perspective of innovation systems theory, with focus on the Chinese and the Japanese national systems of innovation and triple helix relations. The study builds on a qualitative case study approach (e.g. Yin, 2003), and data and information is extracted from literature while findings are derived through a process of inference and “sensemaking” (Weick et al., 2005). Findings - (1) Positive cycles of economic development can be achieved without an entrepreneurial university. (2) The entrepreneurial university is a consequence rather than a cause in the evolutionary path of innovation systems adapting to their changing environments. (3) The role of university in innovation cannot be fully characterized and explained within the analytical framework of innovation systems. Originality and value - This study explores the link between university, entrepreneurship, and innovation from a novel perspective linking different streams within the innovation systems theory. It identifies and discusses different aspects of strategic relevance to policy- and decision-making, and suggests directions for further research in the area of academic entrepreneurship and innovation. Additionally, it identifies the need to develop new analytical frameworks for innovation studies based on a process-oriented approach. Keywords Entrepreneurial university, innovation systems, triple helix, entrepreneurship, innovation process, China, Japan

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