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Institutional Strategy of Social Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education

Abstract

The *purpose* of the paper is to study the institutional strategies of higher education institutions for the development of social entrepreneurship and the existing formal structures aimed at supporting this activity, as well as to outline the directions of university activities implemented according to the strategies. *Methodology.* The research is based on the collection and analysis of data from the official websites of 10 universities from different countries of Europe and America, which either clearly state efforts to develop social entrepreneurship, or have entrepreneurship development together with a focus on the third mission of the university. The empirical data are combined with the outlines of modern scientific research of Ukrainian and foreign scientists on the topics of social entrepreneurship and the third mission of universities. The *results* of the study show that universities around the world are paying more and more attention to the importance of their third mission and see themselves at the heart of community development in all its diversity of needs and activities. At the same time, very few define the development of social entrepreneurship as one of their objectives, and most work on entrepreneurship development in general, pointing to the importance of directing university education and research towards tackling social challenges. *Practical implications.* As many universities already have administrative support and a range of activities for the development of entrepreneurship education and youth start-ups, together with a focus on the third mission of universities, a favourable environment is being created to introduce the development of social entrepreneurship as one of the strategic goals of modern higher education institutions under the conditions of modern global issues. *Value/originality.* The study was carried out as part of a young researchers' project on the development of social entrepreneurship centres at Ukrainian universities for the post-war development of the country.

Keywords

social entrepreneurship, higher education, strategic development, social issues, community development, startups, mechanisms

JEL: A23, I23, I25, O31, O35



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1 Introduction

For several years the issue of development of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine for its economic and social development has been actively discussed in the national scientific community in the conditions of absence of legislative bases for this form of economic activity and unified definition of the phenomenon. Researchers pay attention to the huge potential of social entrepreneurship for solving or at least alleviating social problems and improving the local/national economy under crisis and global challenges, which is highly relevant for Ukraine (Achkasova, 2022; Bielov, Rosul, 2022; Mikhailina, Mozhovaia, 2022; Nahorna, Maksom, 2022; Revko, 2022; Verbytska, 2022). One of the issues under discussion is the role of various stakeholders in supporting

social entrepreneurship, its emergence and operation. Namely, works are devoted to public sector entities, state bodies, non-governmental organisations, business, etc., the mechanisms of their influence and forms of interaction.

There are also studies that show the role of higher education in this collaborative effort, focusing on teaching students social entrepreneurship or related skills in theory and practice, universities providing professional support to social entrepreneurs, authorities and communities (Nesterova, 2016; Oleksenko, 2017; Topalova, Shvydka, Torianyuk, 2021), but their number is limited and the question is not sufficiently clarified.

The aim of this paper is to study the institutional strategies of higher education institutions for the development of social entrepreneurship and the

existing formal structures aimed at supporting this activity, as well as to outline the directions of university activities implemented according to the strategies.

To achieve this, the question of the third mission of universities is outlined, followed by the case study of European universities that incorporate entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship into their institutional strategies and practices. The analysis of foreign experiences is followed by a study of Ukrainian realities and suggestions for improving the situation.

2 Third Mission of Universities

This study does not focus on study programmes in social entrepreneurship, as these do not exist in all universities, but are the efforts of many higher education institutions that are needed to make a real contribution to supporting the development of social entrepreneurship at both local and national levels. Instead, contemporary universities are viewed as community centers that develop not only with attention to educational and research activities, but also to their third mission.

It is defined that the third mission of universities is the economic and social mission of the university and its contribution to communities and territories (Compagnucci, Spigarelli, 2020). Thus, universities that dedicate their efforts to fulfilling this mission do not only focus on their academics, students and alumni, but see their target group more broadly, as the whole community of the city, region, country, and therefore support initiatives that have a wider social value.

In fulfilling the third mission, universities inevitably promote university-industry-government cooperation (Compagnucci, Spigarelli, 2020), proclaiming themselves to be a research centre focused on developing solutions for the economy and society at large; a cultural centre open to social initiatives; a centre for the development of start-ups offering opportunities to young people and other stakeholders.

At the same time, universities can shape their strategic engagement with the third mission in different ways. Some researchers outline three different models: the first model, "the entrepreneurial university", includes universities that have a clear entrepreneurial model with IP revenues, spin-offs, filed patents and granted patents, and focus on commercialisation activities as third mission outputs; the second model, "the engaged university", additionally includes collaborative research, contracts, consultancy and facilities that configure the engaged university model; while the third model, "the regional engaged university", puts special emphasis on the regional component of university outputs

that constitute the regional engaged university model (Sánchez-Barrioluengo, Benneworth, 2019). From the research perspective, this means that some universities will focus their strategies mainly on entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer, while others will pay more attention to the social aspect of entrepreneurship and community initiatives, which can also be reflected in the organizational structure of the institution.

3 Institutional Strategies for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship

All universities have a set of institutional strategies that represent the main directions of their activities or related issues. For example, there are proposed institutional strategies for cybersecurity in higher education institutions that include changes in university governance, establishing cybersecurity KPIs, cybersecurity policies, guidelines and mechanisms, creating a cybersecurity culture, etc. (Cheng, Wang, 2022). Similarly, there are universities that are concerned about their internationalisation, digitalisation, regional development, etc. Despite the diversity of the themes, there are points that they all have in common, namely: 1) they are clearly defined in a document/set of documents; 2) there are mechanisms and ways of working developed for their implementation; 3) there are university subdivisions and separate positions that share responsibility for their implementation.

Table 1 shows the correlation between the focus of a university's third mission, the strategies developed to develop social entrepreneurship and the responsible subdivisions. The universities selected for analysis were chosen on the basis of the availability of social entrepreneurship strategies or their close analogues on the universities' websites, and included representatives from different countries.

It can be concluded that it is quite difficult to find higher education institutions that have strategies aimed directly at the development of social entrepreneurship. Mostly, they are created for the development of entrepreneurship or for the implementation of the third mission of the university, where there is a clear focus on society and addressing social issues, community problems, etc. On university websites, there are concepts such as "social impact," "socially significant topics," and "shaping the world," which imply community-focused efforts by universities as part of their entrepreneurial activities and general work. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that the established entrepreneurial hubs, innovation centers, impact laboratories, and other university units created to implement these activities can directly or indirectly work for the development of social enterprises.

TABLE 1 Social entrepreneurship development strategies: focus and basics

Nº	University	University vision / mission	Institutional strategies	University subdivisions
1.	University of Strathclyde (United Kingdom)	a catalyst for positive change, economic benefit and social impact	Entrepreneurship strategy 2020-2025	– Entrepreneurship Hub – entrepreneurship ambassadors in every Department
2.	Stanford Graduate School of Business (United States of America)	a place where anything and everything is possible	not found	– Social Entrepreneurship Hub – Center for Social Innovation – Center for Entrepreneurial Studies – Impact Labs
3.	University of Vienna (Austria)	targeted use and transfer of academic knowledge to solve various social problems; technology and innovation transfer in the form of cooperation with public and private enterprises.	Third Mission statement	– Project management of “Third Mission of the University of Vienna” – rectorate
4.	Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy)	...an economic and cultural engine for the local area...	Third Mission statement	– Deputy Rectors network of departmental delegates
5.	Furtwangen University (Germany)	...relating contributions from teaching, research and continuing education directly to socially relevant topics and future technologies, addressing them collaboratively with stakeholders from business and society	Third Mission statement	– Applied Research – Innovation and Research Center – HFU Academy
6.	University of Debrecen (Hungary)	...involvement of the university with its environment, with society and the effects of its actions	Third Mission statement	– the whole university – University Industrial Park – Off-site departments
7.	University of Torino (Italy)	...generate knowledge outside academic environments to the benefit of the social, cultural and economic development	Third Mission statement	– Agora Scienza – University Historical Archive – 2i3T Incubator – Knowledge transfer
8.	IE University (Spain)	We train the leaders of tomorrow with a global vision, entrepreneurial mindset, and humanistic approach to drive innovation and positive change.	“Entrepreneurship at the University” direction	– IE Venture Lab – IE Entrepreneurship Club (students’ initiative)
9.	University of Texas at Austin (United States of America)	... achieve excellence in the interrelated areas of undergraduate education, graduate education, research and public service.	“Entrepreneurship & Innovation”	– Austin Technology Incubator – Texas Innovation Center – IC ² Institute – Office of Technology Commercialization
10.	University of Salford (United Kingdom)	...life-enhancing research, innovation and education that not only transforms the lives of our graduates, but shapes the world we live in.	2020-2027 strategic plan	– Commercialisation Team – Entrepreneurship Hub

Source: created by the author based on data from official university websites

4 Mechanisms for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in Universities

Obviously, a university strategy aimed at developing entrepreneurship (social entrepreneurship) is not enough to achieve the goal. What is needed is an action plan and a network of partners to support it. Table 2 presents the analysis of the above-mentioned universities in terms of the community of partners they involve in their work and the specific forms and mechanisms created to achieve the strategic objectives.

From the above information, it is possible to distinguish 4 main areas of mechanisms for

the development of entrepreneurial culture in universities: educational, scientific, networking, and infrastructure. The educational area includes trainings, workshops, lectures, mentoring programmes, etc. organised by university staff or external experts; scientific – research on topics important for business and community development; networking – meetings with entrepreneurs, governmental and non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders to help establish necessary links, share experiences, discuss common issues, develop common goals, etc.; infrastructural – creation of spaces where the above areas could be physically implemented.

TABLE 2 Mechanisms and stakeholders for entrepreneurship development

Nº	University	Institutional strategies	Implementation forms	Partners
1.	University of Strathclyde (United Kingdom)	Entrepreneurship strategy 2020-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - entrepreneurship programme – Strathclyde Inspire a start-up zone - one-to-one support - a new Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship module for undergraduates - Entrepreneurship MOOC - inspirational events - student projects and volunteering - investment fund for early-stage seed investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national and local government - local council investor network - HEI partners - alumni - industry
2.	Stanford University (United States of America)	not found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - free planning tools for social enterprise - social innovation curriculum - Social Entrepreneurship Program - experiential learning - fellowships for students joining a social/environmental purpose organization - support research topics related to social innovation - database of social enterprises in Stanford - Impact Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social enterprises - business - alumni - national and local government bodies
3.	University of Vienna (Austria)	Third Mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project “Third Mission of the University of Vienna” (publications, conferences, workshops, trainings, press meetings etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practitioners, - politicians, - pupils - alumni - third-party funders - public and private enterprises
4.	Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy)	Third Mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - commissioned research, patents, spin-offs - publishing - projects, national and international projects - lifelong learning - internships, trainees - volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> public and private enterprises local self-government general community other HEIs academicians
5.	Furtwangen University (Germany)	Third Mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new spaces - start-up projects - extracurricular studies - technology transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regional and supra-regional – players - companies - alumni
6.	University of Debrecen (Hungary)	Third Mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge-related services fundraising activities vocational training programs realms of sports and culture regional labour market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - business - Municipality of Debrecen - state organizations - academics - students - alumni - general community
7.	University of Torino (Italy)	Third Mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patent Management - Business Incubator and Technology Transfer process - University archives and museums - Open access - Public Engagement activities, including for instance – the Researchers' Night and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - university - industry - society
8.	IE University (Spain)	“Entrepreneurship at the University” direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start-up accelerators - mentorship programs - networking - industry coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - founders - professors - mentors - investors, partners, companies - collaborators
9.	University of Texas at Austin (United States of America)	“Entrepreneurship & Innovation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support tech commercialization - interdisciplinary start-up innovation - involving mentors, advisers and investors to support start-ups - networking - start-up library - co-working space - workshops, speaker series, coaching sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local start-up community - investors - other HEIs - state and nonstate – organizations - general community
10.	University of Salford (United Kingdom)	2020-2027 strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accelerator programme - boardroom masterclasses - competitions - GovTech Academy - trainings - resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - network of incubators, accelerator programmes, investors and local authorities - alumni - SMEs

Source: created by the author based on data from official university websites

5 Conclusions

To summarize, universities around the world are increasingly focusing on the importance of their third mission, seeing themselves as the nucleus of community development in all its diversity of needs and activities. Universities are no longer just educational institutions with a strong academic component, but also cultural centers, community development centers, platforms where stakeholders can meet and discuss common problems, hubs where

new ideas can be developed and shared to change the world for the better. In this context, the continuation of the topic of social entrepreneurship in universities is very relevant, as many universities already have administrative support and a set of measures aimed at developing entrepreneurial education and youth startups. By combining this and the third mission of universities, a favorable environment is created for the implementation of social entrepreneurship as one of the strategic goals of modern higher education institutions.

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