

Building Trust to Exercise Triple Helix in Higher Education

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Triple Helix concepts advocates for knowledge economy co-developed by academia, industry and public sector. The trust factor plays a role of catalyst in the relationship of three. The literature also terms it as confidence building measures. In developing world like Pakistan, the absence of trust factor negatively impact the spillover effects of higher education. Some earlier failures also add fuel to this trust deficit.

1. Higher Education of Pakistan

Higher education of Pakistan has grown exponentially during last one decade. Higher education commission played an instrumental role in setting up new universities, labs, training PhDs and good quality of paper publication. Pakistan is competing with BRICS countries now in the citation of research papers.

The next challenge of higher education of Pakistan is to be responsive to local needs and relevant. The academia has to ensure its spillover effect by contributing largely to social and economic development. The academia has to respond to challenges of relevancy of curriculum, need based research and transfer of technology for economic impact (Lin, 2004).

2. Trust Deficit in Higher Education

A number of factors cause trust deficit in higher education. The trust deficit is of two types as internal and external. The internal trust deficit is between the institutions of higher education. This deficit causes the duplication of academic resources and lack of resource sharing. The scientists do not share expertise and seldom collaborate for joint projects of technology development. The departments in the institutions of higher education seriously lack a culture of collaboration and sharing (Bok 2009, p 222). This trust deficit marginalizes the academic capacity to serve external stakeholders.

The second trust deficit is between academia and external stakeholders. The number of factors causes this deficit like a difference in priorities, timely delivery, over commitment, lack of funding and lack understanding of each other's. The most critical component that widens the trust gap is wrong planning of each other role in the process of technology development and transfer.

3. Confidence Building Measures in Higher Education

There are certain measures to gradually build internal and external trust. The first measure is strong leadership in the office of research, innovation and commercialization (ORIC). The top team of ORICs needs to be dynamic, outreaching, good communicators and people of relationship. Such kind of ORIC team inspires trust through their interactive and friendly behavior. Key performance indicators of ORICs (KPIs) should include outreach, contract research, external funding and technology delivered to industry and society. ORIC team needs to be full time, dedicated and supported by infrastructure, financial and communication resources.

Policy measures provide enabling environment for both scientists and industry to work. Scientists always question why we should solve industry problems whereas we judged annually for teaching and publication. Scientists lose interest in the start or mid of the projects which causes failure and serious trust deficit. Once scientist loses trust it is difficult to rebound it again (Bok, 2009). Policy related to the requirement, appraisal and incentives must incorporate high weight for problem-solving research. This policy also drives trust of external stakeholders and they believe in strong technology oriented mechanics of the institutions.

Faculty and students exposure to industry and society problems also highly affect the trust with external stakeholders. The faculty having high exposure and good understanding to local problems speak the relevant language and inspire trust.

In academia, students are used as research workers through their thesis and research works. The poor quality of students working leads to trust deficit. The academic system of thesis conduct and supervisory process must ensure good quality and rigorous research output from the students.

The magnitude of the project also determines its ultimate destiny. The high-tech projects having a higher likelihood of failure and cause trust gap to widen. Academia must start with short, doable and efficiency improvement related projects. The success rate in smart projects will lead to good trust and high value projects. The smart projects are also more likely to be delivered on time.

Ownership of the projects through internal system guarantees trust development. Academia must have internal department body to review the progress of industry projects and responsible for taking measures in case of low performance. Industry seldom trusts second time if their given projects are carelessly treated with no timely report, required support, dedicated time and significant attention to the projects deliverables.

4. Conclusion

The academic knowledge spill over and contribution through technology transfer is the outcome of a process which starts from trust building. The Ignorance of the foundation of trust causes building of research collaboration collapse. We suggest that academia of developing countries like Pakistan start from confidence building measures and build a knowledge economy and innovation culture on it.

References

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