

Abstract for Paper in the 4th Engage HEI Conference, London, January 2012

Universities and their Innovation and Economic Development Profiles: A UK Perspective

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Aims

The paper explores the changing role, function and impact of universities within innovation systems, their classification and their growing prominence within an innovation policy arena.

Background

Although there has been the growing appreciation that universities and other HEIs have often very different profiles with regard to these functions, it has only been very recently that researchers have acknowledged that different universities or higher education colleges will act and interact differently depending on their type. In studies of university-industry links, very few studies have sought to recognise or categorise how different universities may interact with firms, but instead have treated them largely as uniform, non-variant organisations. What is particularly important here is that not all universities will be expected to act the same; different universities will act differently.

Data and Analysis

The data used in the paper is drawn from the latest UK higher education-business and community interaction (HE-BCI) surveys and the Resources of Higher Education Institutions. The former is an annual survey starting in 2001 and is managed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The objective of the survey is to collect data on a wide range of third stream activities, which capture the contribution of HEIs to the economy and society. The latter is managed by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and provides data relating to academic staff and the finances of UK universities and Higher Education colleges. The data is

analysed using cluster analysis to generate different typologies of universities and higher education colleges in the UK.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Without recognising these variations in the types of universities we are also likely to ignore potential differences in how they act and interact with other actors and their local environment. This is important not only for policy but also the (internal) strategies of the universities themselves.