

Developing Special-Purpose Centers at Arish University in Light of the Entrepreneurial Management Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the theoretical foundations of special-purpose centers in contemporary universities, explore the philosophy and objectives of the entrepreneurial management approach in such centers, assess the current situation of special-purpose centers at Arish University, and develop a future vision for their development. The study adopts a descriptive methodology to monitor, analyze, and interpret the status of these centers and the entrepreneurship management approach. A questionnaire was utilized and distributed to a sample of 233 faculty members. Based on the results, a proposed future vision was presented to activate special-purpose centers at Arish University through the entrepreneurial management approach. The study also recommends further research to propose frameworks for qualifying center leaders to adopt this approach and to establish and develop special-purpose units aligned with new faculties such as Home Economics, Veterinary Medicine, and Human Medicine.

Keywords: *Special-purpose centers – Entrepreneurial Management*

Introduction

In light of the multiple and accelerating challenges facing the world, university education has gained great importance in societies, playing a distinguished role in improving living standards and enhancing the quality of life. Universities are considered institutions that play a vital role in various areas of social, economic, cultural, and political development. Universities play a fundamental role in serving and developing society, and their primary functions include education, scientific research, and community service, which are often closely interconnected. Although teaching is the main role of universities, there has been a shift towards focusing on community service as a core function. (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016, p.2).

Despite this, it can be said that there are shared goals uniting universities in their pursuit of fulfilling their social role. This includes seeking diverse funding sources and granting universities more autonomy, particularly in administrative and financial domains. It also involves establishing direct links between university outputs and the funding they receive. Furthermore, universities aim to provide the labor market with high-quality skills and to increase research and studies focused on development and innovation, through establishing specialized educational and research centers. (Zaman, 2015, p.2).

Universities' interest in creating special-purpose units is essential to activate their role in providing services to the local community, meeting diverse needs, and participating

effectively in national development programs and projects. These units depend on faculty members' expertise to offer services and consultations to the local community and to generate self-funding by participating in financing other projects and programs. (Tehami et al., 2023, p. 413).

Such centers aim to serve the surrounding local community and meet various needs while actively contributing to national development initiatives. These university-based special-purpose centers are founded on two key pillars: first, active participation in providing services and consultations, leveraging the expertise of faculty members to fulfill the university's mission of community service; second, contributing to the financial resources required for these centers' operations and university projects. (Nassar, 2020, p.23).

Special-purpose centers are clearly manifested in transforming specialized colleges into effective components of the national economy. They encourage future generations to engage in the contemporary world with advanced practical and scientific thinking, helping create a society of young entrepreneurs capable of swift adaptation and innovation. Hence, these centers must base their strategies—vision, mission, and objectives—on initiative and innovation. They should also improve performance to keep pace with global transformations and the university's new entrepreneurial function. The academic revolution of the 19th century made research a central mission of universities, and the second academic revolution—entrepreneurship—made economic and social development an academic mission as well. (Thabet, 2021, p.160).

This study arose from the idea of examining the special-purpose centers at Arish University in light of the entrepreneurial management approach.

Research Problem

The sense of the research problem emerged from reviewing several previous studies closely related to the current study variables. These studies reveal a scarcity of research addressing special-purpose centers. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies have specifically explored the activation of special-purpose centers at Arish University using the entrepreneurial management approach.

Some studies highlighted the need to improve student services and recommended developing these services through the enhancement of special-purpose centers, such as the studies by Refai et al. (2017), Abdel Aal (2017), Raka et al. (2018), and Selim et al. (2018). Meanwhile, the findings of Mostafa and Ahmed (2020) indicated that the reality of entrepreneurship in some Egyptian universities is relatively low—both in terms of entrepreneurial activities and the percentage of entrepreneurial individuals among university students facing unemployment after graduation.

Other studies suggested the need to adopt and activate the entrepreneurial management approach in university development. Accordingly, it is essential to enhance special-purpose centers and activate their roles in serving university students and the surrounding community in beloved Sinai, offering new and advanced services that enable these centers to possess the entrepreneurial capabilities to meet university and community needs.

Based on the above, the main research question can be formulated as follows: How can the special-purpose centers at Arish University be developed in light of the entrepreneurial management approach?

The following sub-questions are derived from this main question:

1. What are the theoretical foundations of special-purpose centers in contemporary universities?
2. What are the philosophy and objectives of the entrepreneurial management approach in university special-purpose centers?
3. What is the current status of special-purpose centers at Arish University?
4. What is the proposed future vision for developing special-purpose centers at Arish University using the entrepreneurial management approach?

Research Objectives

1. Identify the theoretical foundations of special-purpose centers in contemporary universities.
2. Explore the philosophy and objectives of the entrepreneurial management approach in university special-purpose centers.
3. Assess the current status of special-purpose centers at Arish University.
4. Propose a future vision for developing these centers using the entrepreneurial management approach.

Methodology and Research Tools

To address the current research problem, the researcher employed a descriptive approach to monitor, analyze, and interpret the state of special-purpose centers and the entrepreneurial management approach. A questionnaire was used to examine the realities and challenges of these centers and their application of the entrepreneurship approach. It was distributed to a sample of 233 faculty members. Among them, 113 participants held academic positions (48%), 95 held administrative positions (41%), and 25 held positions combining academic and administrative roles (11%).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in two main areas:

1. Theoretical Significance

- This study enriches the Arabic literature related to the entrepreneurial management approach and offers a valuable contribution to this field.
- It may help raise awareness among those responsible for these centers about their strengths and weaknesses, supporting informed improvement.

2. Practical Significance

- The study responds to rapid economic changes that necessitate development, training, and innovation.
- The findings can assist Arish University leaders in making informed decisions to effectively utilize special-purpose centers and benefit from the proposed future vision to achieve university goals and community service.
- The importance of the study also stems from the essential role these centers play in supporting university operations and serving students, graduates, and the surrounding community.

Scope of the Study

The study adhered to the following boundaries:

- Subject Scope: The study focused on four dimensions: (1) vision, mission, and objectives of the special-purpose centers at Arish University; (2) characteristics of the centers; (3) development requirements; and (4) enhancing their role in light of the entrepreneurship approach.
- Geographical Scope: The study was limited to several special-purpose centers at Arish University, including: the Human Resources Development Center and its sub-units (Faculty Training, ICT Training, Student Skills Training, and Community Service Units), the Community Service and Environmental Development Center at the Faculty of Education, the Scientific and Technological Information Center at the Faculty of Computers and Information, and the University-wide Measurement and Evaluation Center with its specialized units.
- Human Scope: The study targeted a sample of 233 experts affiliated with Arish University who are involved in the special-purpose centers.
- Time Scope: The field study was conducted from March to May 2023.

Study Results

1. Theoretical Framework Findings

1. The study concluded that special-purpose centers have specific roles and objectives. It also reviewed the experiences of some international universities that adopt the entrepreneurial management approach.
2. The study emphasized the importance of adopting the entrepreneurial management approach and establishing its foundational pillars.
3. In light of the American and British experiences with special-purpose centers, several locally applicable benefits were identified:
 - **Encouraging Research and Development:** University-affiliated enterprises strengthen collaboration between academics and industry, enhancing R&D and facilitating the transformation of academic discoveries into market-ready products and services.
 - **Providing Funding Sources:** These centers and enterprises enable universities to generate additional revenues, supporting research, development, and education while reducing dependency on government funding or tuition fees.
 - **Job Creation:** Special-purpose centers and affiliated enterprises can create employment opportunities for students and graduates, allowing them to engage in part-time or full-time project-based work, thus enhancing their experience and employability.
 - **Enhancing Technology and Innovation:** Special-purpose centers foster technological development and innovation, support startups and SMEs, and contribute to both local and national economic growth.
 - **Community Services:** University special-purpose centers provide consulting, workshops, and educational programs to local and national communities, improving the quality of life in surrounding regions.
 - **Enhancing University Reputation:** When university-affiliated special-purpose centers succeed in their projects and ventures, they enhance the university's reputation and increase its appeal to students, academics, and funders.

2. Field Study Results

1. There is a general lack of clarity regarding the vision, mission, and objectives of special-purpose centers, which leads to weak guidance and direction. Without a clear vision and objectives, staff may feel uncertain and lack motivation, resulting in dispersed efforts, poor coordination, and limited effectiveness. This confusion can hinder priority setting, reduce teamwork, and lower the willingness of members to engage or take responsibility.
2. The characteristics of special-purpose centers at Arish University were found to be moderately developed in terms of financial, technical, and administrative independence, and in their contribution to community development. They also support scientific research, student and faculty development, internal resource growth, promote positive attitudes among students, organize charity exhibitions, and foster human development.
3. Requirements for activating these centers include linking them to national economic development plans, establishing independent boards of directors, defining clear policies for their operation, coordinating among different centers, implementing continuous evaluation, and adopting strict accountability systems.

Additional field results:

4. Special-purpose centers have specific roles and objectives, and international experiences were reviewed.
5. Emphasis was placed on adopting the entrepreneurial management approach and securing its essential pillars.
6. A general lack of clarity in vision, mission, and objectives remains a major concern.
7. The centers at Arish University demonstrated moderate levels of independence and societal contribution.
8. Development needs include linking centers to national plans, forming independent boards, and establishing clear operational policies.

Study Recommendations

In light of the findings, the researcher proposed a future vision for the development of special-purpose centers at Arish University using the entrepreneurial management approach. The researcher also recommended conducting the following studies:

1. A proposed framework to qualify heads of special-purpose centers to adopt the entrepreneurial management approach.
2. A proposed framework to establish and develop new special-purpose units aligned with newly founded faculties, such as Home Economics, Veterinary Medicine, and medical services provided by the Faculty of Human Medicine.
3. An assessment of how effectively special-purpose centers at Arish University meet the social needs of North Sinai Governorate.

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