

Qualitative Analysis of Faculty Members' Perceptions of Creative University: A Path to Educational Innovation

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Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Aminibagh, A., & Salimi, J. (2025). Qualitative Analysis of Faculty Members' Perceptions of Creative University: A Path to Educational Innovation. *Quarterly Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education*, 31(2), 45-66.



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ABSTRACT

In today's world, the concept of the creative university is emerging as a new educational and research paradigm that seeks to promote creativity, innovation, and collaboration between faculty and students. These types of universities strive to create a dynamic and inspiring environment with the aim of responding to complex social and economic challenges. In this regard, faculty members' perception of the concept of the creative university can play an important role in the formation and development of this paradigm. This qualitative study investigated faculty perceptions of the creative university concept at the University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj. Employing a grounded theory approach grounded in Charmaz's constructivist perspective, semi-structured interviews (telephone and in-person) and written questionnaires were used to gather data from 13 purposefully selected faculty members across diverse disciplines. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Charmaz's three-stage coding process (open, axial, and selective coding) was applied, aided by MAXQDAv2020 software, to identify core categories. Findings revealed that faculty associate a creative university with cultural dynamism, a civilization-building ethos, rational discourse, aspirational capacity-building, scientific vibrancy, and self-governance. Empowering strategies identified included functional agency, international engagement, civil dialogue, prioritizing activism, enhanced university vitality, and a robust knowledge cycle. The study highlights the crucial role of dynamic culture and active engagement in fostering creativity and innovation within universities, emphasizing the synergistic interplay of internal (cultural, attitudinal) and external (international collaboration, dialogue) factors in realizing the creative university ideal.

Keywords: Creative University, faculty members, grounded theory of constructivism, Higher education



Introduction

Creativity has been developed in the last decade under new titles and terms such as creative economy, creative class, creative citizen, creative age, creative industries and creative cities (Means, 2017). Creativity refers to the ability to generate new and useful ideas or solutions. This process involves thinking outside the box and combining existing ideas in new ways. (Kalar, 2020) Innovation, on the other hand, refers to the implementation and execution of these creative ideas in practice. In other words, creativity can lead to the generation of new ideas, but innovation means transforming these ideas into new products, services or processes. (Eshet & Margaliot, 2022) Together, these two concepts lead to scientific and technological advances and play an important role in economic and social development. According to McCulloch-Lowell, creativity refers to human actions or processes that have results that demonstrate a new type (McCulloch Lowell, 2010).

Methodology

Qualitative research approach and specifically the grounded theory strategy of Charms constructivism was used. The research participants were professors of the University of Kurdistan in Sanandaj in several different disciplines. Sampling was carried out in a purposive manner. With maximum diversity and until theoretical saturation of data with 13 faculty members, the charter of semi-structured interviews (telephone, in-person) and sending questions in written form continued. After implementing the Charms three-stage coding method (open, focal and selective) was carried out. Also, the MAXQDAv2020 qualitative data analysis software was used to output the central categories of the research.

Findings

In relation to the first research question, the results indicated that the components of a creative university can include cultural dynamism, a civilization-building attitude, rational and logical discourse, capacity-building aspiration, scientific vitality, and self-regulation and self-management. Also, in relation to the second research question, the findings showed that the strategies for empowering a creative university include the functional necessity of agency, becoming a member of the international community, practicing civility and dialogue, prioritizing activism over observation, strengthening the vitality of the university, and equipping it with a knowledge cycle. As a result, the importance of creating a dynamic culture and supporting active activism in universities to achieve creativity and innovation is emphasized and should be considered. And it should be acknowledged that the realization of a creative university requires a combination of internal components (culture, attitude,) and external strategies (global participation, dialogue,).

Conclusion

First question:

From the perspective of the professors of the University of Kurdistan, what do the components of a creative university include?

In relation to the first research question, the results showed that the components of a creative university include cultural dynamism, a civilization-building attitude, rational and logical discourse, capacity-building aspiration, scientific vitality, and self-regulation and self-direction. The findings of this section are consistent with the study outcomes of Barnet (2020), Pozon et al (2013), and Barnet (2018).

Second question:

From the perspective of professors at the University of Kurdistan, what strategies are there for empowering a creative university?

Also, in relation to the second research question, the results indicated that the strategies for empowering the creative university from the perspective of the faculty members of the University of Kurdistan could include the functional necessity of agency, becoming a member of the international community, practicing civility and dialogue, prioritizing activism over observation, strengthening the vitality of the university, and equipping it with a knowledge-use cycle. The results of this section are also consistent with the findings of the studies of Barnet (2020), Davarpanah et al (2019), and Mahboobie & Toure (2008).

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