

Intervention of Prof. Hossam Badrawi

Title of Session	Creativity, learning, and academic freedom
Moderator	Eva Egron, Magna Charta Observatory Council Member, and Secretary General of International Association of Universities -AIU, France
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As a concept, innovation has expanded and diversified considerably in the past few years. In terms of the related strategy, innovation is perceived as an exploited, competence-based competitive asset, which, in addition to the application of technology, can be founded on e.g. new service and business models, working and operating methods, or the management of product concepts and brands. This can be applied to our objectives in universities the same way.

Most typically, innovation emerges as a combination of many competencies. Broad-based innovation policy creates the preconditions for operating models combining the needs of users, consumers and citizens, alongside knowledge, creativity and competence. Our stakeholders in universities, student, their families, educators & professors, workers and professionals, local citizens and society and the whole world.

In a globalized economy where knowledge-intensive goods and services dominate the market, innovation is a main driver for economic growth as it leads to increased competitiveness, which in turn leads to employment generation and wealth creation. Our wealth in universities is in our youth and wide based academia.

Universities and research centers would and should be the major suppliers of innovators and innovative ideas.

To ensure the sustainability of this growth, a strong innovation culture must be created and maintained. At a national level, the starting point for building such a culture is the education system and as the first target group should be schoolchildren from primary to high school, universities are and should remain the engine of innovation, with their wealth of the targeted age group of young people.

The challenge is the balance between traditional university systems, and freeing these systems to be able to accommodate the unusual, and the extraordinary thinking and sometimes the behavior of the new generation.

The Balance between Freedom and Discipline

The balance between the need for the bureaucracy to sustain the relationship with governments and the out of the box thinking to change the system but keep the finance and support.

Finally, the balance between what we believe is right and what is being expressed rightly by the new generation.

I would like also to refer here to the Magna Charta meeting In Alexandria, Egypt 2009, in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina , where we presented an important paper about the core of Universities , builders of civilization or providers of services. I hope you can follow the link and read that contribution to the Magna Charta principles and values. Building civilization needs creativity with sustainable growth, needs the energy of the young with wisdoms of the experienced, Needs leadership, and courage, needs creativity and innovation.

The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.

Academic Freedom

In terms of resources, university must be managed well and remain solvent, however it is certainly not a business or an industry. It must be concerned with the needs of its community and its country, yet as an institution of higher learning is not a political party. It must be morally responsible, certainly, but, even when religiously affiliated, like Al Azhar University in Egypt, it is not a religion nor a mosque or a church by itself.

A college or university is simply an institution of higher learning and researching. Those within it have, as a first concern, to cultivate evidence and truth rather than abide by the particular judgments of institutional benefactors, the concerns of religious authorities, the needs of public opinion, the effects of social pressure, or the dictates of political proscription.

To follow on that, general concern for intellectual and academic freedom exert specific responsibilities. Thus, on the part of boards and administrators, there is the obligation to protect faculty and students from inappropriate pressures or destructive harassment.

As for the faculty itself, there is the obligation to distinguish personal conviction from proven conclusions and to present relevant data fairly to students because this same freedom asserts their right to know the facts.

From the side of students, there is the obligation to sift and question information, to be actively involved in the life of the institution, but involved as learners at appropriate levels. The determination and exercise of the students' proper responsibilities should be related to their status as undergraduate, professional, or graduate students.

Intellectual freedom does not rule out commitment, rather it makes it possible and personal. Freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual or the educational institution, certainly not toward the task of inquiry and learning, nor toward the value systems that may guide them as persons or as schools.

Hence, institutions may hold to a particular, social, or religious philosophy, as may individual faculty members or students. However, to be true to what they profess academically, individuals and institutions must remain intellectually free and allow others the same freedom to pursue truth and to distinguish the pursuit of it from a commitment to it. As a result, all concerned with the good of colleges and universities should seek ways to support their institutional integrity and the exercise of their appropriate autonomy and freedom.

Risk of University Decline

University history shows the slow and inevitable decline of academic institutions that brought about by the following:-

1. An unconditional submission to the ideological interest of the State, political parties, organized minorities or economic organizations
2. An excessive preoccupation with current local issues, and faculty self-interest;
3. An acceptance of the status quo, implying resistance to develop or change;
4. a disregard of the universal mission of the university as an institution devoted to teaching and research and in steady search for excellence in these two areas;
5. a use of the two pillars of universal academic values that of academic freedom and of university autonomy, not for democratic governance or the protection of students and teachers in their pursuit of truth and new knowledge, but as a self serving tool towards undeserved wealth or merit.

It was Albert Einstein who once said: “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them”.

Higher education institutions are expected to be key change agents in developing societies, leading them to the future:

To take heed on Einstein, they should not be allowed simply to pick up the fight of past wars – at the risk of decline, thus missing the priority for reform, in their own ranks and, at the same time, in and for society as a whole.

To face the future, however, they need to be imaginative and creative, open to the unexpected; otherwise, they will reinforce current problems through routine thinking – to their own detriment and that of their surrounding society.