# Chapter 83
# Israel's Higher Education Innovation Policy:
## Was or Dreamed a Dream?

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## ABSTRACT

*Innovation in Higher Education systems has not been regarded as an important issue by policy makers, education stakeholders and leaders; it seems to be regarded as 'nice-to-have' rather than a necessity. Scientific outputs and research findings can be used as input in national-international policies only if researchers and policy-makers cooperate closely, ensure relevance of topics, and improve communication, dissemination, and implementation of research recommendations. The purpose of this study is to present a clear and systematic description of innovation policy statues in the reality of Higher Education systems in Israel. The research was guided by three principal questions: First, to what extent innovation policy exist in Higher Education and in interface policy systems. Secondly, how to inform policy makers of the vital importance of innovation as a key to economic growth, so they can benefit from a better understanding of the innovation process. Third, how to involve policy makers who are aware of the importance of innovation to push for a policy change.*

## INTRODUCTION

In order for education systems to cope with social and economic changes and perform efficiently, innovation is essential. Innovation in education (and Higher Education systems) has not been regarded as an important issue by policy makers, education stakeholders and leaders; it seems to be regarded as 'nice-to-have' rather than a necessity. Recently, innovation in education has started to gain attention. This includes systemic study of innovation, innovation strategy and implementation of innovation strategies by policy makers and leaders. Scientific outputs and research findings can be used as input in national-international policies only if researchers and policy-makers cooperate closely, ensure relevance of topics, and improve communication, dissemination, and implementation of research recommendations. These are the tools needed for leading change, innovation, and implementing new strategies.

The nature of the knowledge-generating process itself is evolving towards a more network-embedded process, with an increased emphasis on stakeholder partnerships, trans-disciplinary growth, and heterogeneity of all players involved

The purpose of this study is to present a clear and systematic description of innovation policy statues in the reality of Higher Education systems in Israel. The research was guided by three principal questions: First, to what extent innovation policy exist in Higher Education and in interface policy systems. Secondly, how to inform policy makers of the vital importance of innovation (mainly organizational, process and management innovation, not innovation in an academic discipline as such) as a key to economic growth, so they can benefit from a better understanding of the innovation process. Third, how to involve policy makers who are aware of the importance of innovation to push for a policy change.

This research is important because it identifies the variables that effect leadership in Higher Education institutions. This information will make it possible for universities and stakeholders of the Higher Education system to compile a body of knowledge, methodology and tools for the successful implementation of innovation and change, as part of their capacity to steer themselves into the future as well as imparting a valuable legacy for students, employees and the community and society at large.

## LITERATURE REVIEW: INNOVATION

Definitions of innovation abound throughout the literature. Some define innovation in the context of using economic tools whereas others emphasize engineering, business and management fields, technology expertise, or socialism. Most definitions refer to the notion of doing "old" things in a new way. Some of the terms refer to added value to process or product, implicative aspects of the ideas (Mckeown, 2008), or to the degree of change (mild or incremental/revolutionary). Other definitions relate to "introduction of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), process, or method" and to "systemic innovation" as "any kind of dynamic, system-wide change that is intended to add value to the educational processes and outcomes. (OECD, 2008).

Innovation policy, although fashionable, is often misunderstood; it is not an appendix to science and technology policy, as often presented. Innovation—the application of knowledge of all types so as to achieve desired social and economic outcomes—is broader than science and technology, often combining technical, organizational, and other sorts of change (World Bank 2007).

Innovation is becoming a "Bon-Ton" in many fields such as policy, business and technology. In a world of globalization, economic crisis, incremental changes and competition, its importance is rising. Even though innovation has traditionally swung into and out of fashion, as Barsh, Capozzi, and Davidson (2008. p.1) put it "like short skirts: popular in good times and tossed back into the closet in downturns", in these days, as the world descends into one of the sharpest downturns of several decades, policy makers look to innovative and entrepreneurial activities to form a basis for long-term, sustainable production" (OECD, 2009).

Researchers refer to different types of innovation (as defined on the Innovation Center web site):

- **Management Innovation:** The invention and implementation of a management practice, process, structure, or technique, new to the current state of the art, with the intention of furthering organization goals.

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