

# THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITIES IN SOCIAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Yasar KONDAKCI**



# INCREASING OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- Problems in the current economic development paradigm
  - Economic development paradigm falls short in dealing with societal problems that result from political, economic, social, and ecological issues
  - No clear role for the university in an economic milieu dominated with the state and market dynamics.



# DETACHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY FROM SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- The university and the society are increasingly falling apart
  - The impact of research output is questioned
    - What is the impact of research on real societal problems?
    - Can we accomplish any goal without addressing social problems?
- An organization's goals (university) must be accomplished in an integrated manner with the surrounding environment



# DETACHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY FROM SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- The growing number and complex nature of social problems
  - poverty, migration, unemployment, children and women issues (e.g., child labor, domestic violence), and aging
  - European universities to undertake a more active role in dealing with these problems.
- Universities undertake anecdotal or scattered interventions to social problems if they do so in any way.
  - No capitalization of knowledge, skills, and practices for SI to create a real-world sustainable impact on society.





## DETACHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY FROM SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- European universities fall behind their potential in contributing to social change.
  - Universities rank number 6, after the NGOs, private sector, public organizations, and foundations in social innovation initiatives.
  - Universities occupy the prominent niche in using public resources; however, the return of the resources to dealing social problems is very limited.
  - Universities are key institutions of knowledge production and dissemination in European countries.

## DETACHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY FROM SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- COVID-19 Crisis and social change
  - The only expected role seems to be limited to find a vaccine or treatment. What about the social problems caused COVID-19



# SOCIAL INNOVATION/SOCIAL CHANGE

- ▶ “new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources” (Pisano et al., 2015 as cited in Eryilmaz, 2020).
- ▶ Social innovation needs to engage with a social problem in a way that is “more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals” (Phills et al., 2008; as cited in Eryilmaz, 2020)



# ENGAGE IN SOCIAL CHANGE

- Role of the university in SC
  - Provide research-based evidence for facilitating SC in the society.
  - Technical support for SC
  - Directly involve in SC
- Three important objectives in promoting SC in the society:
  - Identify social needs
  - Increase interest in societal challenges
  - Motivating to improve the overall quality of life in the country thus strengthening global competitiveness (Zalite and Mazure, 2017; as cited in Eryilmaz 2020).





