

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Objectives: The evaluation of a specific entrepreneurship ecosystem, namely in this case Imperial College London, based on the perception of its stakeholder was the main objective of this Master thesis. To achieve this objective, the functioning of an entrepreneurship ecosystem and its components need to be understood in the first place. This involves the study of existing literature on the theory of the general system, entrepreneurial environments as well as university-based ecosystems in order to help understand and outline the important elements of such systems and their interrelations. The understanding of such a system and the interrelation between elements is complex and varies between regions and universities. The questionnaire was adapted to the region and university (Imperial College London) to measure the perception of stakeholders operating in an entrepreneurship ecosystem. There is a lack of an approach to measure the strength of an entrepreneurial environment. This questionnaire represents a first attempt towards measuring an entrepreneurship ecosystem in a specific region or an institution, based on its stakeholder perception.

Methodology: A quantitative survey (94 completed questionnaires) and a qualitative analysis (seven interviews) are the basis of this research study. The results of the questionnaires were gathered online, whereupon all information from the interviews was gathered through personal discussions with each interview partner. The interview partners were selected in order to get a broad overview of people working in different positions at Imperial College London.

Findings: First, an overview of Imperial's activities in the area of entrepreneurship has been recorded. The perception of all participants was statistically analysed and complemented with the qualitative results of the interviews. Throughout the study period and according to the results of the quantitative and qualitative research findings, Imperial College was assessed to be a supportive environment for entrepreneurship and engages in several entrepreneurial activities. It is interesting to see that the perception of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities is according to the position and backgrounds of participants different and thus judged subjectively. The perception also varies from practical approaches of entrepreneurship, where participants are focusing on the creation of start-ups and spin outs to create financial returns. Others are focusing on the academic aspect and undertake research to provide high quality education in entrepreneurship and increase Imperial's ranking.

Keywords: General system theory, entrepreneurial environment, regional economic development, university-based entrepreneurship ecosystem