

Performance of university-industry collaborations, qualitative and quantitative evidence from the Netherlands

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Performance of University-Industry collaborations, qualitative and quantitative evidence from the Netherlands

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Abstract

This paper aims at identifying the elements that positively affect the performance of university-industry collaborative projects. We look in particular at the level of scientific and technological achievements of the project, the degree to which firms make use of the knowledge developed, and the subjective evaluation of both involved parties. Moreover, this paper examines the factors affecting the different perceptions of barriers to university-industry collaboration. To undertake this research, we rely on both in-depth data collected on 30 cases of university-industry collaboration to the development of a specific knowledge and/or technology, as well as on Dutch survey data collected via two questionnaires - one addressing industrial researchers and the other academic researchers.

Our results suggest that project's performance depends on the type of knowledge being developed, on the origin of the projects' idea, and on the level and type of university-industry interaction during the project. We find that university-driven projects, although being more risky and troublesome, allow obtaining unexpected fruitful scientific and technological developments, with high spillovers to several other fields. Industry-driven projects, in turn, are more likely to benefit participating firms. Absorption of knowledge developed in collaborative projects depends on factors residing mainly on the industrial side. Firms need to invest in capability building and in knowledge transfer, especially in labour mobility. For both industry and university, earlier experiences have a positive effect on the evaluation of their collaboration. They also avoid overemphasising barriers to collaboration. Still, when both parties join the project with different expectations, they are likely to evaluate differently their project. This is also the case when projects results are of different value for the respective parties.

Keywords: university-industry collaboration, performance, barriers to knowledge transfer, collaborative project characteristics

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