

REALITIES REGARDING THE STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT NEEDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ACTUAL ECONOMY. STUDY CASE

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Abstract:

The development of the entrepreneurial skills has become an important source of economical growth because this can stimulate innovation and can successfully lead towards innovative and flourishing businesses which generate an economical growth in that specific region. This is much true as entrepreneurship is a mindset that centers on the creative discovery and the pursuit of opportunities, even when resources are scarce. In this article there will be presented the results of a comparative analyse after a questionnaire based survey was conducted in order to see the entrepreneurship spirit, entrepreneurial intentions and the entrepreneurial perceptions among students from West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Management (considered business studies) and students from Faculty of Pedagogy (considered non-business studies).

Key words: entrepreneurship, perception, entrepreneurial intention, role models

1. New challenges of higher education – University in 21st century

As our society becomes more dependent than ever upon new knowledge and educated people, upon “knowledge workers,” the higher education business must be viewed clearly as being one of the most active “growth industries” of our times.

Today's students are members of the “digital” generation.

They have spent their early lives surrounded by robust, visual, electronic media. They approach learning as a “plug-and-play” experience, unaccustomed and unwilling to learn sequentially—to read the manual—and rather inclined to plunge in and learn through participation and experimentation. While this type of learning is far different from the sequential, pyramid approach of the traditional university curriculum, it may be far more effective for this generation, particularly when provided through a media-rich environment.

In the 21st century, higher education means new roles as teachers which become designers of learning experiences, processes, and environments.

The modern university interacts with a diverse array of external constituencies—alumni and parents, local communities, state and federal government, business and industry, the media and the public-at-large (Duderstadt, 2007). All depend on the university in one way or another, just as we depend upon them. The management of the complex relationships between the university and its many constituencies is one of the most important challenges facing higher education.

The contemporary university becomes more complex and multi-dimensional than ever. Beyond the classical triad of teaching, research and service, society has assigned us an array of other roles: health care, economic development, enabling social mobility and change, sustaining national security even as we attempt to explore the far reaches of space or the depths of the ocean or the fundamental nature of matter or life itself.

Also, today's society is asking us to assume additional roles such as revitalizing K-12 education, providing models for multicultural society, rebuilding our cities, securing economic competitiveness and developing the entrepreneurial skills.

2. Considerations regarding entrepreneurship higher education in USA and European OECD countries

Today it is no longer enough to train students for a career. While educators of primary and secondary levels have an opportunity to foster entrepreneurial attitudes that could lead to individuals taking up an entrepreneurial career later, the quality of entrepreneurship could be substantially improved by the technical, entrepreneurial and/or managerial knowledge and skills imparted at the higher education level. Entrepreneurship education can help promote an entrepreneurial and innovative culture by changing mindsets and providing the necessary skills.

Nowadays a job is safe only if the results of the work done are positive and if the individual possesses a set of specific competences. The individuals have to be prepared to act in a dynamic environment which is constantly changing.

The development of the entrepreneurial skills has become an important source of economical growth because this can stimulate innovation and can successfully lead towards innovative and flourishing businesses which generate an economical growth in that specific region. This is as much true as entrepreneurship is a mindset that centers on the creative discovery and the pursuit of opportunities, even when resources are scarce.

Education provides the intellectual tools and skills that allow “would-be” entrepreneurs to visualize and evaluate opportunities (Fiet, 2001b). It also helps them conceive ways to overcome barriers while pursuing these opportunities.

Understandably, the value of entrepreneurship education is widely recognized in the United States (Katz, 2003) and some other OECD countries (Welter, 2005).

However, this is not always the case in other parts of the world – especially Central, Eastern and Southeastern European countries, where entrepreneurship education is still in its infancy. In these countries, the need for entrepreneurship is greatest, but the supply of entrepreneurship teachers and role models is scarce (Zahra, Welter, 2005).

In the United States, for example, entrepreneurship education is extensive and varied, from high school through to the doctoral training. Universities and specialized trade associations also offer courses and development programmes that foster entrepreneurial risk taking.

Most entrepreneurship education in the United States takes place at the graduate level and creates pressures on faculty resources.

Even numerous universities have combined the skills of traditional academics with those of entrepreneurs by providing opportunities to co-teach specialized courses such as technology-based entrepreneurship or new venture financing, the growing demand for faculty and entrepreneurship courses has prompted some universities (University of Louisville) to explore launching (Babson College and Clemson University) and actually offering doctoral programs in entrepreneurship (University of Louisville).

The situation of entrepreneurship education is different in European OECD countries.

Entrepreneurship education often has a more academic flavor than it has in the United States. The majority of entrepreneurship professors are traditional academics and universities have made little use of former entrepreneurs in teaching.

This is the major difference between US and European OECD countries: in US practitioners and former entrepreneurs are well represented in the classroom – as

teachers, guest lecturers or executives in residence who counsel the faculty, students and the administration about entrepreneurship curricular issues (Table 1).

Table1. Differences in goals, opportunities and challenges associated with undergraduate and graduate entrepreneurship programmes

Entrepreneurship Programmes	United States	European OECD
Characterisitics	Dominated by the view that entrepreneurship is risk taking in pursuit of opportunities to create wealth.	Tending to equate entrepreneurship with creating, managing and growing SMEs.
	Focus on experiential learning.	Focus on theory and more analytically
	Many entrepreneurs and former executives involved in teaching and leading the programmes	Usually housed in traditional academic departments, even though some universities have created entrepreneurship centres
	Placing increasing emphasis on “differentiation” through discipline specialization, stage of development	Placing greater emphasis on studying family firms
Characterisitics	An important means of fund raising, providing opportunities for internships and potential jobs	
Characterisitics	Though the profit motive remains strong, there is growing attention to social issues in entrepreneurship.	

What can one observe?

The value of practical experience is recognition and act like a strong stimulate for involved all the actors in the educational system.

The US model is being copied in OECD countries. More and more entrepreneurs and managers are being recruited to teach entrepreneurship in Europe, where university regulations permit.

3. Realities regarding the student perception of the education and development entrepreneurial spirit needs in Romania

On higher education in Romania, initiatives and other actions in entrepreneurship are smaller and less systematic than those of European Union countries which have established chairs of entrepreneurship (Belgium), have developed the master's degree in entrepreneurship (Denmark) centers; development of entrepreneurship that encourages the creation of enterprises based business ideas from students projects (United Kingdom).

From this reason, we believe that it is necessary to introduce the training programs and developing a business culture of the students in university curricula as a obligatory or optional regardless of profile completed.

3.1. Research focus

In the present study case we investigate entrepreneurship spirit of the students from West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Management (considered business

studies) and Faculty of Pedagogy (considered non-business studies), and the interest for developing the own business of them. A comparative analysis will be realized, trying to present the profile of a successful entrepreneur as it is perceived by the students from faculties which have been investigated, the entrepreneurial intentions and the entrepreneurial perceptions among students from these faculties.

The results of this present paper work are important because gives a true picture of the needs of students who wish to develop their own business and from this perspective result some clear directions in building partnerships with the business field, partnerships which represent one of the solutions to respond the demands of professionalism, new competencies and skills on the labor market.

3.2. Methodology

A questionnaire based survey was conducted to second and third-year management and educational sciences students during their lectures. We have chosen this years because of a better understanding of the labour market after few year of study, when students should have been developed some competences for access the labour market, and also because the Romanian students acquire some work experience during the bachelor studies, doing volunteering or having paid jobs.

The hypothesis of this research are:

- H1. Entrepreneurial intentions of students of the Faculty of Management are more numerous than those from the Faculty of Pedagogy
- H2. Entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by family models, and previous teaching experience
- H3. Entrepreneurship is seen more as a desire to make money, but entrepreneurial competence can be developed.

The objectives of this research are:

- O1. To identify the three important competences for being an entrepreneur.
- O2. To identify the ratio of theory / practice for teaching a course in entrepreneurship education at the faculties of management and educational sciences, and what other ways have the universities to promote entrepreneurship education
- O3. To propose a definition of entrepreneurship according to student perceptions.

From a total number of 292 students enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2011-2012 from the Faculty of Management (240 totally) and Faculty of Pedagogy (52 totally) from the West University of Timisoara, a total of 109 responses were achieved (28 respondents from educational sciences and 81 responses from management), using probabilistic sampling. The research was conducted in the period February-March 2012.

Data was collected by-means of a self-administered questionnaire. The table below outlines the questions contained in the questionnaire. To eliminate the weaknesses in functionality and comprehensibility, the questionnaire was pre-tested with students from the first year at the Faculty of Management and Faculty of Pedagogy.

Table 2. Summary of the questions contained in the questionnaire

Dimension	Number of statements	Type of questions
Demographics	2	closed-ended questions
Entrepreneurial intentions	2	closed-ended questions
Entrepreneurial role models	2	closed-ended questions
Role of universities	3	multiple choice, 5 point Likert scale
Characteristics of entrepreneurs	2	open question, multiple choice
Background – entrepreneurship education	1	closed-ended and open question

3.3. Results

The distribution of the respondents is as follows: 72,48% females and 27,52% males.

Business and non-business students have different opinions about the qualities of a successful entrepreneur. The overall rate and order of the qualities is: creativity, leadership and communication. Separately, the conclusions are:

- *Pedagogy*: leadership, communication, critical thinking
- *Management*: creativity, leadership, punctuality.

Asked about the qualities which both employee and employer should have, the communication skills are on top, but also new skills are mentioned:

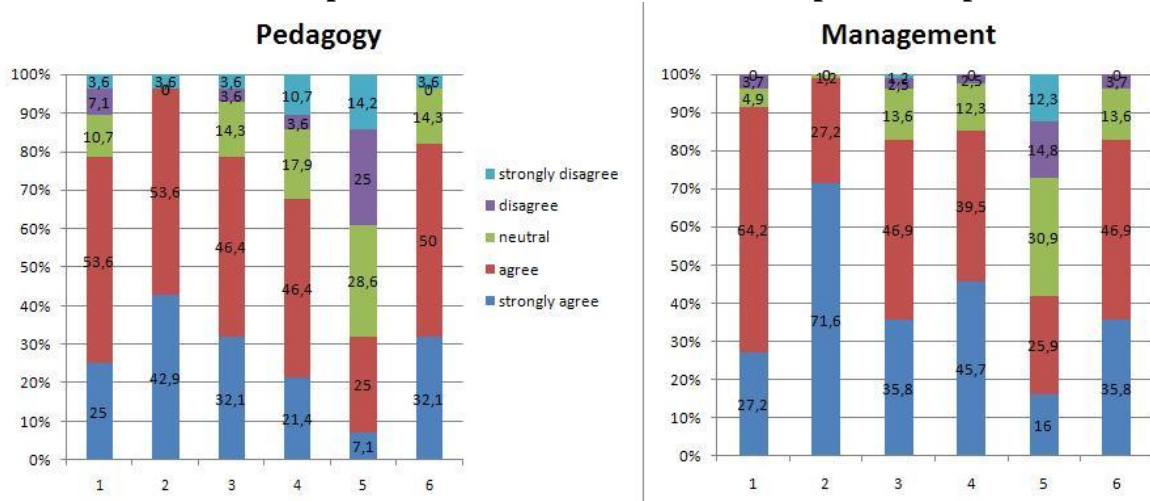
- *Overall*: communication (73,4%), creativity (40,4%), team work (35,8%).
- *Pedagogy*: communication (67,9%), problem solving (50%), team work (46,4%).
- *Management*: communication (75,3%), creativity (46,9%), team work (32,1%).

The meaning of the word “entrepreneurship” has the same sense, both for management and educational sciences students: *business*. Other connotations are related to: leadership, responsibility, success or how to make money. But this issue was detailed a little bit and an additional question was integrated in the questionnaire: *You see the entrepreneurship as* (multiple response):

1. Ability and disposition to make money
2. The ability to turn an idea into practice
3. A set of skills that you need both as employer and/or employee
4. The way to personal and professional success
5. A specific characteristics which only certain people have it, is an innate
6. A competence that can be developed

A comparative analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 3. Comparison on affirmations about entrepreneurship



There are no big differences between the responses offered by students, with few exceptions:

- 10,7% of students from pedagogy strongly disagree that entrepreneurship is the way to personal and professional success
- There are more students from management who strongly agree that entrepreneurship is the ability to turn an idea into practice (71,6%, compared with 42,9%).

What is evident after the analysis of the responses received is that entrepreneurship is not a specific characteristics which only certain people have it, is an innate, but it could be developed and to conduct to personal and professional success.

If during the next semester an entrepreneurship education course will be taught, 54,1% of the respondents prefer a 30% theory – 70% practice ratio.

Below are presented the student’s preferences in how the university could promote the entrepreneurship in higher education:

Table 4. Alternatives in promoting entrepreneurship education

	Faculty		
	Pedagogy	Management	TOTAL
Meetings with entrepreneurs	46,4%	70,4%	64,2%
Establishing business incubators	28,6%	29,6%	29,4%
Interdisciplinary collaboration	53,6%	56,8%	56%
Project coordination	50%	40,7%	43,1%
Mentoring activities	14,3%	22,2%	20,2%

Related to the background in entrepreneurship education or entrepreneurial models in family, students from management have more models of entrepreneurs (43,2%) in family (parents 29,6%, brothers and sisters – 2,5% and other relatives (11,1%), than students from pedagogy (just 10,7% of students have entrepreneurial models at home). Also, both groups of students have studied entrepreneurship education in high school (71,4% students from pedagogy and 69,1% students from management). Moving forward and trying to check the second hypothesis, it was analysed the correlation between entrepreneurial models in family, background in entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions. The table 5 presents this correlation.

Table 5. Correlations in entrepreneurial intentions

		Models in family	Entrepreneurial intentions	Study in high school
Models in family	Pearson Correlation	1	.222	.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021	.290
	N	109	109	109
Entrepreneurial intentions	Pearson Correlation	.222	1	.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021		.376
	N	109	109	109
Study in high school	Pearson Correlation	.102	.086	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.290	.376	
	N	109	109	109

In this case Parson's "r" is 0.222, which means a weak correlation; entrepreneurial models in family and educational background are not influencing the entrepreneurial intentions of the students from pedagogy and management.

There is an entrepreneurial intention for 83,5% of respondents (67,9 % for students at pedagogy and 88,9 % for students at management), and the majority of them intends to start a business after 2-3 year. Table 6 presents a more detailed statistic.

Table 6. Entrepreneurial intentions

After		Faculty		Total
		Pedagogy	Management	
6 months	Count	1	6	7
	% within faculty	3.6%	7.4%	6.4%
1 year	Count	1	8	9
	% within faculty	3.6%	9.9%	8.3%
2-3 years	Count	9	38	47
	% within faculty	32.1%	46.9%	43.1%
4 years	Count	9	20	29
	% within faculty	32.1%	24.7%	26.6%

4. Conclusions

This article highlights the growing need to create an enterprise culture which will encourage and foster greater initiative and entrepreneurial activity. The study presented here represents a first step in defining concrete measures in how entrepreneurship education could be promoted in higher education and how universities could be entrepreneurial institutions, according to students perceptions and intentions. Two hypothesis established by the authors were confirmed: H1) entrepreneurial intentions of students of the Faculty of Management are more numerous than those from the Faculty of Pedagogy and H3) Entrepreneurship is seen more as a desire to make money, but entrepreneurial competence can be developed. H2 - Entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by family models, and previous teaching experience was infirmed, there is no powerful influence of family models or previous experience in learning entrepreneurship in starting a business. Anyhow, students at management have more entrepreneurial models in family and this could be one reason for selecting the faculty they study.

The findings illustrate that a considerable percentage of students aspire toward entrepreneurship, regardless their academic discipline. Also, this study suggests some concrete solutions for promoting the entrepreneurship in higher education, but a more elaborated study is necessary. The development of a curriculum for teaching entrepreneurship and the analysis of the impact of such a course among business and non-business studies is a next step for further research in teaching entrepreneurship. The competences indicated by students as being important both for employees and employers (entrepreneurs) represent the basis for this. It could be useful that entrepreneurship education to be adopted in an integrated manner where interdisciplinary teams and project work are encouraged, as suggested by students. This allows educational institutions to benefit from the expertise and synergies that can be obtained from cross-functional learning.

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