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Predictors of professional entrepreneurial intention and behavior in the educational field

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Abstract

This study explored the relations between entrepreneurial intentions and behavior and a set of psychological factors to the student enrolled in two master programs in sciences of education. We used a scale derived from Theory of Planned Behavior, Bateman and Crant's Proactive Personality Scale, and a five points Likert scale for attitude toward learning. We also use items to assess entrepreneurial intentions and behavior, applied on a sample of 48 graduates of the two master programs. Research findings show that the attitudes toward learning and proactive personality are the most predictive factors for entrepreneurial behaviour.

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1. Introduction

To affirm that we live in a dynamic and rapidly changing world it is already a common place. Society itself is forced to learn, to respond in a flexible manner to the new evolution of events. „The rise of the knowledge-based society and the competitive labour market in both local and global context has made higher education become even more important for individuals and society to survive.” (Sam, Van der Sijde P., 2014). Unfortunately, compared to the dynamism of a knowledge-based society, the school, and especially university react with inertia, and a clear tendency to self-reproduction of his traditional system. Over the last few decades, globalization and ever-increasing demands of the knowledge-based economy have caused higher education in most countries around the world to undergo significant transformation. (Sam, Van der Sijde P., 2014). Maassen and Olsen (2007) indicate that these

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reforms have taken place „in the context of a perceived crisis in European higher education, where arguments related to decreased quality, lack of efficiency and poor relevance are heard frequently” (apud Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2013).

In the extensive literature on the entrepreneurial university and the emergence of new forms of academic entrepreneurship, the divergences between the needs and demands of industry and those of academic researchers are often pinpointed as an impediment to closer collaboration. (Styhre, Lind, 2010). „This gap has led universities to undergo reforms and restructuring to be responsive to the needs of the knowledge-based economy.” (Sam, Van der Sijde P., 2014). It is the main mission of the university to prepare professionals able to managing all of these challenges. „Entrepreneurship can be increased through education, especially entrepreneurship education” (European Commission 2006). In particular, the role of entrepreneurship education has been called for as one of the key instruments to increase the entrepreneurial attitudes of people (Liñán and Chen, 2011)

But, what is an entrepreneur. What is his personality profile? Or, specifically, what are the basic factors that lead an individual to be willing to become an entrepreneur? (Zhang, Duysters and Cloodt, 2013).

Two theoretical models have applied to explain entrepreneurial behavior. The Shapero model (Shapero and Sokol 1982) is called the entrepreneurial event model (EEM) and is used to describe an entrepreneurial process where intentionality is central (Bird 1988). This model considers business creation as an event that can be explained by the interaction between initiative, ability, management, relative autonomy, and risk. The second model is the theory of planned behavior (TPB), introduced by Ajzen (1991). TPB consists of three components that predict the formation of intention, namely (1) the attitude toward the behavior, (2) subjective norms and (3) the degree of perceived behavioral control (self-efficacy).

Other research has highlighted the role of some personality factors associated with entrepreneurial orientation. Liñán and Chen (2009) found out that personal attitude and perceived behavioral control are the most relevant factors explaining entrepreneurial intentions (apud Liñán and Chen, 2011). More recently, some research have also considered a subjectivist theory of entrepreneurship that focuses on individuals, their knowledge, resources and skills, and the processes of discovery and creativity, which constitute the heart of entrepreneurship (Kor et al. 2007).

In the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, is stressed that young people who benefit from entrepreneurial learning, must develop business knowledge and essential skills and attitudes including creativity, initiative, tenacity, teamwork, understanding of risk and a sense of responsibility (European Commission, 2013). Reinforcing entrepreneurial education in schools, vocational education institutions and universities will have a positive impact on the entrepreneurial dynamism of our economies.” (European Commission, 2013)

Teachers have a central role to promote an entrepreneurial learning. Entrepreneurship begins with entrepreneurial teachers training. Despite the rapid growth of interest in entrepreneur education, there is still a lack of critical mass of entrepreneurship educators in schools and universities across world. (Wilson, Vecseny, 2013). Entrepreneurial teacher training programmes motivate student teachers to develop their own entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes (European Commission, 2013). Entrepreneurial teacher training programs help student teachers to develop their own mission in teaching and their own ‘portfolio’: , to use entrepreneurial strategies and methods, to create an environment that enables creativity and proactive behavior, to transform the assessment process in a learning experience, to provide feedback, to support diversity and individuality.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The research was conducted on a sample of 43 graduates of the two master's programs in the field of Educational Sciences: Educational psychology of preschool and primary school (16 graduates - 37%) and Human Resources in Education. Adult Training and Management 27 graduates - 63%) The common element that allowed the introduction of two categories in the same sample is the introduction of significant elements of entrepreneurship education in the two master programs, both in designing curriculum and in teaching strategies used in the courses. Students were involved in the learning projects, based on specific needs of the target groups (children or adults) for which they have to find and test adequate solutions. In this specific field of teacher’s training we defined the intentions at two

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