

# UPRAVLJANJE PREDUZETNIČKOG OBRAZOVANJA U VISOKO OBRAZOVNIM INSTITUCIJAMA: EMPRIJSKA STUDIJA - SLUČAJ NA RUMUNSKIM STUDENTIMA U POSLOVNOJ ADMINISTRACIJI

## MANAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY-CASE ON ROMANIAN MASTER STUDENTS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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### Summary

Besides the opportunities offered by the labour market (i.e. the employment *per se*), entrepreneurship enjoys an increasingly attention from young students. Therefore, understanding the entrepreneurial trends and attitudes among undergraduate and master students (particularly in Business Administration) could provide deeper and clear insights on the relation between university education and the entrepreneurship requirements in the economic framework.

The subsequent implications are obvious: making adequate public policies to promote entrepreneurship among young people and adapting academic curricula, as to meet the students and employers' expectations. An adequate education may foster entrepreneurial intentions of an individual, as Turker & Selcuk (2009, p. 144) have revealed: "Since the education offered by a university mostly influences the career selection of students, universities can be seen as potential sources of future entrepreneurs".

Since the intentions are the best predictor for actual behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), the research of Krueger et al. (2000) on the antecedents of entrepreneurial intentions among students has underlined the importance of disposition to self-employment of young researchers. This willingness, properly guided, can help to a rapid and successful exploitation of the research results.

Our paper derives from a survey-based research conducted within master students in Business Administration from a Romanian public university. It aims at adding up to the already existing studies regarding the students' ability to capitalize master studies by entering into entrepreneurship. This paper attempts to clarify the following dilemma: to what extent the accumulation of knowledge and skills of high value leads young graduates to self-employment?

Considering to investigate relevant issues on the subject of entrepreneurial attitudes, orientation and potential of graduate students, we have conducted an extended survey in February 2013 and developed a survey-based study. In the present paper we have analysed the entrepreneurial antecedents related to intentions and expectations, motivational factors for starting a business

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and, finally, the key skills and competencies to justify and substantiate (in students' opinion) the entrepreneurial option.

The questionnaire was administered to 123 master students in Business Administration (1st and 2nd year) from the public university in Oradea, Romania, representing all the students enrolled in this program. As descriptions of the respondents, 33% of them were full-time master students (without any job commitments), 3% work in the public sector, 54% work in the private sector and 10% were self-employed. By gender, 71% of the respondents were female and 29% male; by residence, 66% of them live in cities, 10% in small towns and the 24% in rural areas.

Entering into entrepreneurship is considered a serious option for the interviewed master students. Actually, over 91% of the respondents (i.e. 112 students) declared they would be interested to enter into entrepreneurship and launch their own business. The large number of entrepreneurial intentions seems to be a perfect start, but it should not be generalized. In this stage, there are only intentions expressed in a "friendly" framework, i.e. a survey conducted among students in "business", favourable to statements and "virtual raids" into entrepreneurship, but less of specific approaches.

As a brief summary, in quantitative terms, out of 123 master students, 112 are interested in entrepreneurship, 23 previously got entrepreneurial experience, but only 13 of them could be considered active entrepreneurs at the moment. In other words, 100 people (out of 123) studying business administration have never had to deal with an entrepreneurial experience / business, although most of them declared themselves as interested in entrepreneurship.

Another issue investigated refers to actual or potential motivations to entry into entrepreneurship. The most important motivators are: the "expectation for higher earnings" (i.e. 92% of the respondents consider this factor as important or very important), the desire "to be your own boss" (i.e. 83% of the respondents consider this factor as important or very important) and the desire "to do what I like" (i.e. 90%) (note that multiple responses were allowed).

Regarding the meaning of the distribution of responses on different alternatives and motivational assessments, some explanations are needed. On one hand, it is expected that young students, at the beginning of their career, will choose entrepreneurship hoping it will bring consistent income, and it will quickly and directly (!) propel them in management position. On the other hand, we deal with a second category of reasons, less visible, with no particular credit among master students, although we suppose their strong influence is manifested in more subtle ways. It is about the existence of business models and entrepreneurial tradition within the family, the willingness to implement their own idea for a product or service or to meet the challenges etc.

Referring to factors enabling entering the entrepreneurship, as expected, students have a good opinion on their own abilities. They believe they know "how to organize and plan" (69 responses, i.e. 56%), "to communicate" (69 responses, i.e. 56%), "to cooperate" (49 responses, i.e. 40%). By contrast, the ability to do commercial presentation (7% of responses) or to negotiate (18%) are not as familiar for them. Even if the perspective is consonant to the reality, as the large majority of entrepreneurs with consolidated, profitable business have a combination of these traits, students projected a necessity and survival-driven entrepreneurship, focused on circumstantial results. Perhaps, this is due to difficult economic circumstances, market fragmentation and a lack of business models. For example, it is an unpleasant surprise for a highly educated person that some abilities registered modest scores, e.g. the "innovative capacity" with 18 responses (i.e. 15%) and "the ability to promote ideas" or "negotiating" with 7% respectively 18%. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurship is a far away eventuality in the students' plans. However, the overall picture is satisfactory, in line with the realities, and the main action recommended for all responsible and involve actors (i.e. HEI and students themselves) is to bring as much the self-assessed capabilities to current realities.

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HEI and students are in the core of theoretical and practical debate on finding the optimal combination of high-value scientific knowledge teaching and the way to transform this knowledge into future viable and profitable ventures. Our research revealed the presence, for a significant part of the respondents, of a formal and declarative interest for entrepreneurship and a superficial knowledge of the realities and requirements of entrepreneurial careers.

Another concern arising from our research findings is related to the predominance of necessity-driven entrepreneurship. If we add the over-evaluation of generic, difficult to assess skills, serious doubts occur on the effectiveness of master studies and the real motivations of participation in the programs of Business Administration.

The limited nature of our study did not allow us to capture other determinants and features of the entrepreneurial approach, the extent to which HEI are actually prepared for labour market requirements, as to offer entrepreneurial education at high standards. However, an accurate and realistic attitude of master students towards entrepreneurship, nurtured by an adequate and up-to-date training and education could significantly enhance the role and impact of HEI on economic and social development.

**Keywords:** research, entrepreneurship, knowledge, development

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