

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITIES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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ABSTRACT

Considered as the essentials of economic growth, entrepreneurs are defined as people that realize an opportunity and take necessary risks to benefit from it. In order to make aware and direct individuals to national development in early ages and to seed entrepreneurship in minds as a cultural value, entrepreneurship attitudes are becoming widespread nowadays. As being the future entrepreneurs, university students are national resources and every effort to increase entrepreneurial intentions are utmost important for the whole country. In this regard, the aim of this study is to provide a capsulated conceptual framework to highlight the importance of entrepreneurial education and to provide an understanding on where we are as a country.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, university students

ÖZET

Ekonomik büyümenin temel taşlarından biri olarak düşünülen girişimciler bir fırsatı fark ederek bu fırsattan fayda elde edebilmek için gerekli riskleri alabilen bireyler olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bireyleri genç yaşlarda ulusal gelişim ve büyüme hakkında bilinçlendirmek, yönlendirmek ve girişimcilik anlayışını bir kültürel değer olarak genç beyinlere yerleştirebilmek amacı ile girişimcilik günümüzde yaygın bir kavram olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Geleceğin girişimcileri olarak üniversite öğrencileri birer ulusal kaynak olarak görülmeli ve girişimcilik eğilimlerini arttırmaya yönelik her çabanın tüm ülke için önemi göz ardı edilmemelidir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın amacı girişimcilik eğitiminin önemine kavramsal bir çerçeveden bakarak ülke olarak ne durumda olduğumuzu anlamaya çalışmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Girişimcilik, girişimcilik eğitimi, üniversite öğrencileri

INTRODUCTION

Increased global competition, changing demographic structures and fast changing technology make it essential for firms and countries to catch up with the changing environment and to rely on innovativeness in order to provide a sustainable competitive development. Entrepreneurship as one of the important characteristics of this highly competitive knowledge economy in the globalization process, and the reasons behind choosing to be entrepreneurs are to be in the focus in many studies (Schumpeter, 1934; Low and MacMillan, 1988; De Pillis, 1997:22; Dess and Lumpkin, 1996; Barringer and Bluedorn, 1999; Zahra and Covin, 1995). The high interest on the subject is a reason of the social and economic benefits comes along with the entrepreneurial activities. Researchers have long emphasized on the importance of entrepreneurship and innovativeness on providing sustainable competitive advantage, social and economic development of countries and new job opportunities (Amabile, 1988; Porter, 1990; Shefer and Frenkel, 2005; Porter, 1980; Kirckpatrick and Hamel, 2004; Urabe, 1988).

As a process, “the new” is to be introduced by creativity and transformed by innovativeness to “the new product, service, system and mind”. Schumpeter (1934) defines innovations as commercialized inventions on the market by the entrepreneurs. The process is all these things acting in an integrated fashion (Myers and Marquis, 1969). It has been in the considerations of researchers that innovativeness is not only an economic system; it is also a social system that eliminates inequalities, provides employment opportunities and helps to protect environment (Mumford, 2002; Mulgan, 2006; Marcy and Mumford, 2007; Phills et. al., 2008). Drucker (1998), as the specific function of entrepreneurship, defines innovation as *“the effort to create purposeful, focused change in an enterprise’s economic or social potential.”*

Starting-up a business is not similar to entrepreneurship; it is a fact of course, but not the complete picture (Kuratko, 2005). Churchill (1992) defines entrepreneurship as the process of discovering and developing an opportunity by the way of creativity and innovation and trying to benefit from that opportunity regardless of the organizational resources and the position of the entrepreneurs in a current or a new organization. An entrepreneur is explained as a creative and open-minded person that looks at

the environment precisely and sees the needs of the other people and be able to convert these needs into ideas and get together the necessary resources to effectuate these ideas by taking risks through innovation (Drucker, 1998). In a broader sense, an entrepreneur is an individual who pursues the creation, growth or expansion of a process, business, venture or procedure which can lead to the realization of that individual's dream (Carland and Carland, 1997).

Considering the great benefits of innovation and entrepreneurship to an organization as a whole beyond the personal benefits, in order to increase the capacity of producing innovation and entrepreneurial activities, it seems quite essential to have the human capital that nestles the necessary combination of knowledge and skills in them (Alpkan et al, 2010). Individuals play a key role in the innovation process as the "creator and carriers" of the knowledge (Goldenberg, 2004). Taking into account that development of current skills without proper training and education is hard to achieve, it won't be unreasonable to think that the human capital as one core element for innovativeness can be improved and excelled by education and training. Furthermore, considering the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), skillful and educated youths and their potential for innovation could be thought as principle capabilities for future development of a nation. Therefore, if one wishes to understand the entrepreneurial process, one must understand the role of the individual triggering that process (Carland et. al., 1984).

As a knowledge source, the importance of universities in the improvement process of knowledge-based economy has been highlighted by several authors: in national innovation system (Hu and Mathews, 2007), local economies (Fritsch and Slavtchev, 2007; Charles, 2003), and social development and regional creativity (Karisson and Zhang, 2001; Gunasekara, 2004:329; Coffield and Williamson, 1997; Mavin and Bryans, 2000).

As far as the youths are trained up to be creative and innovative, young population could provide utmost benefit to especially developing countries. People who are better educated, have more experience, and invest more time, energy, and resources in honing their skills, are better able to secure higher benefits for themselves and for the society as a whole (Alpkan et. al., 2010). Universities are important institutions for a nation for several ways but in accordance with our study, one of them is to

play a central role is related to national development and providing wealth, and to be a triggering point for technologic innovations by educating the human capital of an organization in a nation that represents the society. The important roles of academicians and policy makers are also mentioned in several studies in supporting new business ventures (for ex. Franco, Haase and Lautenschlager, 2010). As far as the education programs can influence the youths' intention towards entrepreneurship, it seems necessary to pay strong attention to how university students can be directed to entrepreneurship. However, it is not possible to take actions before analyzing the current situation.

1. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EDUCATION

As to Drucker (1998), as being a discipline, innovation and entrepreneurial works are not genius; they require knowledge and can be learned. In accordance with the idea, Kuratko (2005) also implies that an “*entrepreneurial perspective*” can be seeded in the minds of individuals. “*Entrepreneurship can be taught, or at least encouraged, by entrepreneurship education*” (Gorman, Hanlon and King, 1997). A well functioning venture support system could boost entrepreneurship where, entrepreneurship education could be thought as an important element in a venture support system (Hansemark, 1998).

As to Katz (2003), the USA is the pioneer for entrepreneurial education by opening an MBA program by the University of Southern California in 1971 and by 2003, not even mentioning the publications, still at the top with more than 2,200 courses at over 1,600 schools. Therefore following the USA, in Europe, entrepreneurial education programs and publications have been increased rapidly (Kuratko, 2005).

Based on Mwasalwiba's (2010) literature review study, as to reviewed 20 articles, in order to define entrepreneurship education mostly used definitions are listed as follows: attitudes, value, intentions and behavior (32%), personal skills (32%), new business (18%), opportunity recognition (9%) and managing existing firms (9%); where the objectives are listed as follows: increasing entrepreneurial spirit/culture/attitudes (%34); start-up and/or job creation (27%), contribution to society (24%) and stimulate entrepreneurial skills (15%) Entrepreneurship education is defined as “*a process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the insight, self-esteem,*

knowledge and skills to act on them" (Jones and English, 2004). Garavan and O'Cinneide (1994) have categorized the current types of entrepreneurial education and training programs in four groups: education and training for small business, ownership; entrepreneurial education; continuing small business education; small business awareness education. There is a positive relationship between education and training programs and the number of venture start-ups (Garavan and O'Cinneide, 1994). Kirby (2004), after reviewing 205 entrepreneurial programs classify them into three groups: providing awareness about entrepreneurship; provide participants with necessary knowledge and competences who are considering starting up a new venture; and dealing with already opened ventures and focusing on survival and/or growth.

Mwasalwiba's (2010) study indicates that there is a relative agreement that the major rationale for entrepreneurship education is more economical than social and accordingly the aims behind all other objectives are start-ups, self-employment, job creation, knowledge advancement and skill development.

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) is one of the mostly preferred theories by many authors in explaining the intentions to become entrepreneurs. According to the theory, the individual's intention is a result of three factors: the attitude towards the behavior (attractiveness), the subjective (social) norms and perceived behavioral control (self-efficacy). Thus, entrepreneurial education can help students understand and frame the concept and make them healthy personal evaluation about becoming entrepreneurs where at the same time they can maintain a general opinion about being capable of running the job or not within the social forces. In parallel with the view, the literature also mostly deals with two major lines (Franco, Haase and Lautenschlager, 2010): personal or cognitive factors (Wang & Wong, 2004; Chen et al., 1998; Henderson and Robertson, 2000; Lüthje and Franke, 2003; and environmental or contextual factors (Scott and Twomey, 1988; Koh, 1996; Crant, 1996; Lee et. al., 2005).

2. ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TURKEY

In Turkey, entrepreneurship education has also attracted attentions as in other parts of the world with a lag and the scientific

publications have started in the early 2000s. Probably not having any national policy related to entrepreneurship education, according to curricula reviews in 2006, for undergraduate degrees, there were only 15 out of 53 state university offers entrepreneurship course as elective and seven out of 23 private university offer entrepreneurship course where in only four of them were compulsory (Gürol and Atsan, 2006). Again the same study reveals that in terms of MBA programs, nine state and four private universities' programs offer entrepreneurship course where only one private university program offers major in the field (Gürol and Atsan, 2006).

When it comes to reviewing publications on entrepreneurship education, Arslan (2002) focuses on family-based issues such as father's job, family members' education and wage, number of children in the family, and gender and hometown where 182 students respond from one private university. According to the findings, boys are more eager to start-up a small business than girls; family wealth and small numbers of children are positively correlated to entrepreneurial intents. Gürol and Atsan, (2006) have investigated the entrepreneurial traits of university students where 362 students participate to the study in two universities from different regions. The findings indicate that there are significant differences between entrepreneurially inclined students and those who are not on bases of innovativeness, need for achievement, locus of control and risk taking propensity where no differences are found on bases of tolerance for ambiguity and self-confidence. Turker and Sonmez Selçuk, (2009) have investigated entrepreneurial intentions of students based on educational, relational and structural model by the moderation of self-confidence where 300 respondents are selected from two private and two state universities in one city. According to the analyses, entrepreneurial intentions of university students positively relates with perceived educational and structural support however, no moderator effect of self-confidence is found between intention and educational support where a moderator effect of self-confidence is found between intention and structural support. There is also no relation found between intention and perceived relational support. Yılmaz and Sunbul (2009) have developed a scale for university student entrepreneurship where 474 students participate from one university in their study. Ipcioglu and Taser (2009) have examined the personality traits of 486 students from two state universities in addition to family-based demographics.

Their analyses show that there are significant differences between freshmen and senior students on risk-taking propensity, self-confidence and tolerance for ambiguity where no statistical differences found on innovativeness, locus of control and need for achievement. Naktiyok and Timuroglu (2009) have examined the family-based and demographic differences in addition to entrepreneurial intent and Schwartz's human value where 234 students respond from one university. Open to change and self-development values are found to be increasing the entrepreneurial intentions of students. Another finding is the significant differences related to family wealth and gender.

3. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Although the importance of the entrepreneurial education has been emphasized for a while, the progress in opening entrepreneurial programs and courses is slow. But hopeful news was also announced through media. A protocol has been signed between the Higher Education Institute (YÖK) and Chairman of Development and Support of Small and Medium-Sized Organizations (KOSGEB). According to the protocol, on the one hand, all departments from all university will start to entrepreneurial courses either compulsory or elective; KOSGEB also will design "applied entrepreneur education" programs, and on the other, KOSGEB member organizations also will participate special in courses for their continuing education and be able to use the universities' laboratories for their test purposes. The ultimate aim is declared as to increase entrepreneurial intentions of university students and to increase university-industry relations for a greater good. In this regard it is delightful to learn that 26 universities have already included to the program and the President of YOK also implied his intention to make all universities in Turkey included (<http://www.kosgeb.gov.tr>).

As mentioned, there are several studies conducting in Turkish universities especially in the last five years. As to their results, entrepreneurial education seems to increase entrepreneurial intentions. However, because these empirical studies are mostly focused on local universities, they are not sufficient to make generalizations about the whole country.

Therefore, in order to provide a significant insight about the current entrepreneurial propensity and potential of future

entrepreneurs, researchers can conduct a nation-wide field study with sample that represents the whole country. Undoubtedly, when that nation-wide research can make a great contribution to Turkish literature, can also provide a guideline for decision makers such as YÖK for revising old curricula and developing new ones in a direction that supports national growth and competitiveness.

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