

Entrepreneurial Education in the 21st century: Evaluating the efficacy of models

J. Tanas^a, M. Gillin^b and K. Dembek^a

^aAustralian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship, PO Box 218, 3122 Hawthorn, Australia

^bSwinburne University of Technology, Cnr Wakefield and William Streets, Hawthorn, 3122 Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
jtanas@groupwise.swin.edu.au

Principal Topic

Entrepreneurship overcomes the barriers and obstacles of class, race and gender (Aldrich et al., 1983; Hyrsky and Ali, 1996). Widespread entrepreneurship is fundamental to the creation and stabilisation of democracy and is essential to the creation of a middle class and avoidance of extreme polarisation between rich and poor (Kowalik, 2001). It is a vital component of national economic growth and development (Acs, Audretsch, Braunerhjelm and Carlsson, 2005; Carree and Thurik, 2003). Entrepreneurship encourages action, promotes job creation, consequently, improving the overall well-being of the entire country (Bednarzik 2000; Keister 2000). Entrepreneurial undertakings are an art and a science (Kasarda, 1992; Bridge et al., 1998). It is holistic, dynamic, unique and sensitive to a number of antecedent variables (Hofer and Bygrave, 1992).

Despite the lack of a consensus on entrepreneurship two alternative perspectives on entrepreneurial education can be distinguished: (i) the American and (ii) European views. In America, it is very common to concentrate training efforts on specific steps in the firm creation process. Contrary, in Europe, where researchers cannot agree on the concept or the objectives that this kind of education should pursue (OECD, 1999; European Commission, 2003), the main objective is often more general concentrating on developing entrepreneurial personality and a concept of enterprise (Acs & Audretsch, 1990; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999).

Universities in America pioneered the entrepreneurship education with the introduction into MBA courses in 1947, under the title "Management of New Enterprises" (Katz, 2003). In 1953, it was Peter Drucker who offered a course for entrepreneurship and innovation at the University of New York (Drucker, 1985). Babson College introduced the first course in entrepreneurship in 1967. In the USA, a dynamic development process in entrepreneurship training started in the early 1970s advancing to become one of the most important directions of the education of tomorrow. Entrepreneurial education, which received important recognition and has achieved a significant growth in recent decades also in Europe (Blackman & Thompson, 1987, Ashmore, 1990; SBA, 2000; European Commission, 1999), serves to encourage the entrepreneurial mindset (Gorman, Hanlon, & King, 1997; Kuratko, 2004; Vesper & Gartner, 1997). According to authors like Peter Drucker (1985) and Kuratko (2003) entrepreneurship can be taught, as the myth that entrepreneurs are born not made is not valid. Conservative business education is different than entrepreneurial education (Solomon, Duffy and Tarabishy, 2002) as business creation is fundamentally different than managing a business (Gartner and Vesper, 1994). Thus, it is paramount that entrepreneurial education addresses the ambiguous nature of business creation and imparts the necessary social and transferable skills that future employers may seek both in America and Europe. Therefore, the pedagogy of entrepreneurship should consist of not only a deeper understanding of the global and national environment but also the surrounding complexities and how opportunity and business become the integral part of the complexity (Wagner, 2003).

This paper thus explores entrepreneurial education and its potential global implementation from a one agreeable consensus. The main hypothesis of this paper is that a rapid absence of well-amalgamated aspects of quality based entrepreneurial education within a society is more likely to produce a lack of dysfunctional aspects of economic growth, thus prosperity.

Methodology/Key Propositions

The primary research objective was to explore entrepreneurship education, its current status and its potential future progress. We first reviewed the extant literature in entrepreneurship from the American and European perspective, and entrepreneurial education in order to establish a theoretical framework. A clear approach

is undertaken to determine the true meaning of entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial education from the perspective of countries being researched. Methodological options included a broad empirical analysis of the secondary data with content analysis of some relevant documents utilising the public domain of recent World Conferences in Education, selected American and European Universities who deliver programs in entrepreneurship, as well as other official organizational publications. Further, the following sets of data that were considered pertinent for this paper included i) progress of entrepreneurial education in USA and Europe, ii) objectives of entrepreneurial education, iii) Governmental policies regarding entrepreneurship education, and iv) published articles about entrepreneurship education in the period of 1980-2000.

Preliminary findings A critical evaluation of the literature on entrepreneurship education highlighted a number of inherent definitional, conceptual and contextual issues relating to this area of research. Furthermore, preliminary findings seem to suggest that although, being far from perfection, the American model, results in greater progress of business and the overall economy. In addition the study seems to highlight that the dynamism of the entrepreneurship education serves as foundation for 21st century's globalised market. The author's calls for more empirically rigorous and comparable research that would bridge the knowledge gap, and the interpretation that still exist between the European and American markets. New research would offer a more realistic and relevant progress in entrepreneurship education in a rapidly changing socio-economic global environment.

Results and Implications

The role of progression in a knowledge economy in the 21st century dictates fundamentally different aspects of education including expected individual talents. It is strongly believed that it should be the mission of entrepreneurship education within America and Europe to revert back to the true 'entrepreneur idea'. Entrepreneurs of today decoupled wealth creation from personal contribution, replaced risk taking with risk faking, and exploited external opportunity rather than pursuing inner vision. In order to advance with entrepreneurship education we propose a conceptual framework that enhances entrepreneurship education as a dynamic social process of sense making, which is not only cognitive or behavioral, but most importantly affective and holistic.

Contact

Janusz Tanas. Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship, PO Box 218, 3122 Hawthorn, Australia.
(T) (613) 9214 5874, (F) , Email: jtanas@groupwise.swin.edu.au