

ANALYZING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDENTS: A STUDY ON THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP LECTURE PARTICIPANTS OF A BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

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-Abstract-

Over the last sixty years there has been increasing recognition on the importance of entrepreneurship education. Nowadays entrepreneurship candidates prefer to have formal educational experience about the details of setting up and operating a business. However, there are still unknown aspects of the outcomes of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship is the ability to seek out opportunities and turn them into profitable businesses. There are now more than sixty thousand entrepreneurs in Turkey. Although according to the statistics, 80 percent of new businesses close in their first five years. From this point, it can be said that it is important to have not only entrepreneurship intentions but to also possess some entrepreneurship skills and qualifications.

With the help of research questions, the scope of the study encompasses the basic qualifications of an entrepreneur. An empirical study is used with qualitative research methods. This study is a kind of applied research which uses a descriptive survey method, and a validity and reliability proven questionnaire, in order to analyze the mentioned qualifications. The results show that entrepreneurship students studying a graduate degree have both entrepreneurial skills and try to improve themselves towards entrepreneurship.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial qualifications, entrepreneurship education*

JEL Classification: M-Business Administration and Business Economics; Marketing; Accounting / M1-Business Administration / M13-New Firms; Startups

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been more than sixty years since Myles Mace taught the first entrepreneurship course in Harvard Business School in February, 1947 (Katz,

2003: 283). Since then, the logic of encouraging entrepreneurship education has been progressing. This claim is confirmed by the fact that an increasing number of formal education centers in associate, bachelors of art and master of art courses and also informal centers like private nonprofit and open occupational training centers have been engaged in teaching entrepreneurial courses or training entrepreneurs (Shekarey and Arany, 2010: 330). Hence, many studies have been done on the relationship between the entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurship education to examine the effects of entrepreneurship education. Today, entrepreneurship education occupies an important place in providing an individual with the necessary skills including entrepreneurs with self reliance that can, focus on results, and take risks, entrepreneurs who have leadership originality and can focus on possible prospects (Güven, 2009: 266). However, entrepreneurial learning has mostly been limited to learning related theories which are mostly about running small simulated or real businesses (Bagher, and Pihie, 2010: 470; Plumly et al., 2008; Fayolle, Gailly & Lasas-Clerk, 2006; Zhao, Seibert & Hills, 2005). Many studies which broadly consider the issue of entrepreneurship education are available.

According to Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004: 30), entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation and it requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions of which the essential ingredients are the willingness to take calculated risks – in terms of time, equity, or career. It is also the ability to formulate an effective venture team, the creative skill to marshal needed resources; and the fundamental skills of building solid business plans; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunities where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion.

In this framework, this study aims to explore the current situation and the expectations of the students of an entrepreneurship course in Turkey. In this paper, a conceptual framework with a literature review is presented. In the third section, the research methodology and findings are presented. The research method used is validity and reliability proven survey in order to analyze the effects of entrepreneurship education and the perceptions of students. In conclusion, the implications of the findings and areas for further research are detailed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship combines risk, creativeness, personal success and/or innovation and requires taking financial, moral and social responsibility to set up a new and profitable business idea (Remeikiene, Rita and Grazina Startiene, 2008:643). From a different view, entrepreneurship is a process and purposeful activity (Cole, 1953: 643).

According to Schumpeter (1978: 74), an entrepreneur is an innovator who is responsible for doing new things or doing things that are already done in a new way, and he also adds that this is the basis for economic development. Entrepreneurship, through the creation of new ventures or taking place within existing firms, represents one of the major engines of economic growth (Rasmussen and Sorheim, 2006: 185).

Locke (2000: 408) thinks that all human action is the result of both motivational and cognitive factors, the latter including ability, intelligence and skills. The most important characteristics of entrepreneurs are that they are independent, effective and willing to take risks (McClelland, 1961: 36). In addition to these, McClelland mentions that the need for achievement, establishment of social relations and power are important incentives of an entrepreneur. There are many factors which influence an individual to becoming an entrepreneur. Basically, demographical, social, psychological, and environmental factors can be specified. With the help of Hmieleski and Corbett's study (2006) only creativeness, risk taking, assertiveness and being optimistic are taken into consideration as qualifications of an entrepreneur.

There is diversity of views among academics about what constitutes "entrepreneurship" as a field of study (Gartner, 1990: 18). For example, entrepreneurship scholars have differing views on whether entrepreneurship must focus on organization creation, the growth of firms, innovation, value creation, and ownership (Vesper and Gartner, 1997: 407) or to learn the theoretical background of entrepreneurship.

Despite the number of the studies on entrepreneurship education, there are still competencies in the literature that have not been mentioned yet.

2.2. Entrepreneurship Education

The first entrepreneurship lecture was held at Harvard's Business School in February 1947 and drew 188 of 600 second-year MBA students (Jeff Cruikshank,

1998: in Katz, 2002: 283). The reason for the first entrepreneurship course was apparently in response to students who were returning from World War II military service to an economy that was in transition due to the collapse of the weapons industries (Vesper and Gartner, 1997: 405). Later on, the entrepreneurship courses had an ever growing popularity.

The question whether or not it is possible to educate individuals to become entrepreneurs has been raised (Sexton and Upton, 1987: 35). It is found that graduates with an entrepreneurship major are more likely to start new businesses and have stronger entrepreneurial intentions than other graduates (Kolvereid and Moen, 1997: 154).

Entrepreneurial activity can be conceptualized as a function of opportunity structures and motivated entrepreneurs with access to resources (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986: 3). Moreover, education programs can significantly change the entrepreneurial intentions of participants (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003: 132).

We recognize that there is a diversity of views among academics about what constitutes “entrepreneurship” as a field of study (Garner, 1990: 18), as well as, in what constitutes an entrepreneurship program (Vesper and Gartner, 1997:407). Whether or not entrepreneurial education motivates students toward entrepreneurship will be one of the research questions of the study.

2.3. Entrepreneurship Education in Turkey

There are a limited number of schools offering entrepreneurship courses at the primary or the high school level in Turkey although they are more common in vocational high schools. All aside, some universities have specific entrepreneurship departments. There is an increasing demand towards entrepreneurship departments both in public and private universities. In addition to these, project based entrepreneurship courses are given to miscellaneous attendants with EU support. According to the 9th Strategic Development Plan, in order to improve the quality of education, course programs that are based on innovativeness and creativity should be expanded throughout the country and students should be encouraged to make scientific research and to become entrepreneurs (Aşkun and Yıldırım, 2011:667).

3. METHODS AND RESEARCH

3.1. Methods

This study mainly investigates the entrepreneurial skills of the students taking entrepreneurial courses. Their entrepreneurial skills were analyzed under four

dimensions which include creativity, risk taking / resistance to stress, assertiveness and optimism. In order to analyze these levels, statistical programs including frequency analyses, variance analyses, and correlation analysis were used. A validity and reliability proven survey was used in order to analyze the entrepreneurial qualifications of the students. The questionnaire was formed by Hmieleski and Corbett (2006). The findings of the mentioned study indicates that proclivity for improvisation can provide additional information regarding why individuals intend to become entrepreneurs beyond that which can be found in measures of personality, motivation, cognitive style, and social models (Hmieleski&Corbett, 2006:60).

Sample size is totally sixty who are the students in the entrepreneurship class but thirty two students were answered the questionnaire. Thirty-three questions including gender, age, and entrepreneurial related dimensions were asked. The first dimension relates to creativity and bricolage and was partly adapted from Tierney, Farmer and Graen (1999) following the work of Vera (2002) and represents the extent to which individuals are able to produce novel solutions under constrained conditions by recombining available resources while the second dimension relates to the ability to function and excel under pressure in a stressful environment. The last dimension relates to spontaneity and persistence which represents action orientation and determination of individuals toward achieving goals and solving problems in the moment (Hmieleski&Corbett, 2006:51) .

Hypothesis 1: H_0 : The participants think that they are creative.

Hypothesis 2: H_0 : The participants enjoy risk taking.

Hypothesis 3: H_0 : The participants are assertive.

Hypothesis 4: H_0 : The participants are optimistic.

Hypothesis 5: H_0 : The participants would like to establish a new business of their own.

3.2. Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of the study. First is the limited sample size which does not allow for generalization of the results.

The findings of this study contribute to the knowledge in entrepreneurial qualifications and entrepreneurial study. Further studies with a broader scope can be done on the same research area.

3.3. Results / Findings

The answers were first analyzed with a frequency analysis. Then, the relationship between gender and entrepreneurship skills and entrepreneurship intention were analyzed separately.

There were 32 participants who participated in the survey. According to the results 50% of the participants were female while 50% were male. Because the survey was applied to post graduate level students, the ages were relatively mature ranging from 31 and 55. When the question, “do you think you are creative” was asked, the response was positive with 78.1%. According to the results, half of the participants believed that they serve as good role models for creativity while 81.3% of the participants thought that they demonstrate originality in their works. However, the majority responded by saying that they are creative when they are asked to work with limited resources with only 21.9% of the participants thinking vice versa. Additionally, 81.3% of the participants said they identify ways in which resources can be recombined to produce novel products. All of the participants accepted that they find new uses for existing methods or equipment. The respondents who thought they were outside the box accounted for 87.5%. Only 18.8% of the participants mentioned that they do not prefer taking risks in terms of producing new ideas in completing projects. All the participants thought that they identify opportunities for new services or new products. An estimated 56.3% of the participants answered that they perform better under time pressure while 43.8% do not. A majority of 81.3% of the participants need pressure in order to focus their work. The participants answered the crosscheck question, which is about risk taking, with the same percentage as the previous related question. Moreover, 71.9% of the answers were about responding to problems momentarily while 62.5% of the participants wait until the last minute to complete projects and nearly half of the (53.1%) participants said they live for the moment. Approximately 79.3% of the participants mentioned that they seek out pressure filled environments and the majority (62.5%) said they think on their feet when carrying out actions while the remaining 37.5% of the participants did not agree. For the recurrent risk question the answers still have a positive response with the same percentage (81.3%). Only 9.4% of the students thought that they are easily distracted, on the other hand, 90.6% said they are not easily distracted. All the participants (100%) said that they do not let past failures hinder their future performance. The majority of the participants with 90.6% are action oriented and optimistic. Most of the participants believed that they do not easily get frustrated when things do not go their way. When a leadership related question was asked to the students, all the answers were mostly about (90.6%) they are likely to put a

leadership role during a catastrophe and the rest of the answers were missing. More than half of the participants (59.4%) marked that their goal is not more important than anything. All of the participants said they think that they are good at solving logic problems. Only 18.8% of the participants have a business while 90.6% of the participants have a business idea and all of them want to establish their own business.

When looking at the cross tabulation the results were mostly supporting the hypothesis. One of the dimensions of the entrepreneurship is being creative. Mostly both male and female participants think that they are creative; however, 25% of the female participants and 18.7% of the male participants do not consider themselves as creative. "*Hypothesis 1: H₀: The participants think that they are creative*" was accepted.

"*Hypothesis 2: H₀: The participants enjoy risk taking.*" was accepted with 81.2% positive answers. Moreover, according to the results male respondents are more likely to take risks than females. To explain it more clearly, all the male participants stated that they enjoy risk taking while 37.5% of female participants indicated that they avoid risk taking.

In accordance with the results, male participants (81.25%) are more assertive than female participants (62.5%). When looking at the results about assertiveness as a whole the most participants think (71.9%) they are assertive. "*Hypothesis 3: H₀: The participants are assertive*" was accepted. In addition to this, when all the questions related to assertiveness were summed up, the results approvingly show that 81.3% of the participants are closer to the idea of being assertive.

Nevertheless, all the female participants (100%) are optimistic while 81.25% of the male participants are optimistic. "*Hypothesis 4: H₀: The participants are optimistic*" was accepted.

According to the results 37.5% of the male participants have a business while none of the female participants do. On the contrary, all the female participants have a business idea but 18.75% of the male participants do not have one. All the participants (100%) would like to establish a new business of their own and they think that the entrepreneurship education is useful for becoming an entrepreneur. "*Hypothesis 5: H₀: The participants would like to establish a new business of their own*" was accepted.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the entrepreneurial qualifications of entrepreneurship students of a graduate business program.

As mentioned earlier, the first dimension relates to creativity which means the extent to which individuals are able to produce novel solutions under constrained conditions by recombining available resources (Hmieleski&Corbett, 2006:51). Participants are mostly assertive where they are likely to seek out opportunities to display their creativeness. The second dimension relates to the ability to cope in stressful environments. All the answers about risk taking and coping with pressure-filled environment questions show that entrepreneurship students do not avoid risk taking. More specifically male participants are more likely than females to take risks. Individuals who are high in this dimension tend to rise to the occasion and perform best under pressure (Hmieleski&Corbett, 2006:51). The results also show that entrepreneurship students think they are assertive.

The results from the T-test show that there is a meaningful difference between male and female students. According to the results, 37.5% of the male participants have a business while none of the female participants have one. On the contrary, all the female participants have a business idea while only 18.75% of the male participants have a business idea. All the participants (100%) would like to establish a new business of their own and they think that the entrepreneurship education will be useful for becoming an entrepreneur.

It is concluded that entrepreneurship students studying a graduate degree have entrepreneurial skills and they try to improve themselves towards entrepreneurship.

In future research, this study is aimed to extend to all bachelors', graduate, post graduate programs encompassing entrepreneurship in Turkey. Thus, it will be possible to generalize the outputs of the study nationwide, while qualitative longitudinal studies might be an important tool to add new visions. It will also provide an opportunity to compare the results with other countries.

The findings of this research are expected to serve academics, practitioners and related literature.

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