

Entrepreneurship Education: New International Research at USC Upstate

Mark Pruett¹ and Harun Şeşen²

¹Johnson College of Business and Economics

University of South Carolina Upstate

260 East Saint John Street, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 29306

²Department of Business

Turkish Military Academy

Dikmen Caddesi, Bakanliklar, Ankara, Turkey

mpruett@uscupstate.edu; hsesen@kho.edu.tr

Abstract — We summarize a stream of research on entrepreneurship education begun during a recent five-month sabbatical at USC Upstate by Harun Şeşen of the Turkish Military Academy, working with Mark Pruett of the Johnson College of Business and Economics. We have completed three papers using data collected from multiple countries. Each has implications for entrepreneurship education. In the first paper, we conclude that intrinsic (psychological) motives, not extrinsic ones like money, are the major triggers for would-be entrepreneurs and that educational programs need to heighten students' awareness of those intrinsic benefits. The second paper compares faculty and student perceptions about entrepreneurship. We find that faculty and student perceptions frequently diverge and that faculty may underestimate the importance of student self-confidence. The third paper compares men and women. We find significant gender differences and discuss the implications for research and for education.

Keywords — entrepreneurship, education, international, gender

1. Introduction

In the spring and summer of 2012, Dr. Harun Şeşen of the Turkish Military Academy spent a five-month sabbatical in Spartanburg working at USC Upstate with Dr. Mark Pruett, who has published a number of papers on entrepreneurship education. We used survey data to write several new papers. One was presented at a national conference and three are in review at academic journals. This summary describes these recent papers.

2. Şeşen and Pruett: The impact of education, economy, and culture on entrepreneurial motives, barriers, and intentions: A comparative study of the United States and Turkey

We use three primary perspectives used in international comparisons of entrepreneurial intentions—culture, economic conditions, and

education—in a study of attitudes toward entrepreneurship. Using samples drawn from two countries with distinctly different cultures, economies, and education—Turkey and the United States—we develop and test hypotheses regarding the impact of these factors on entrepreneurial intentions and on perceptions of motives and barriers regarding entrepreneurship.

The findings for both countries reinforce our conclusion that intrinsic motives are major triggers for would-be entrepreneurs. This has an important implication for education—we believe that the single most effective way for education in either country to stimulate entrepreneurship in terms of motives is to heighten students' awareness of the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship.

3. Şeşen and Pruett: Faculty-student perceptions about entrepreneurship in six countries

This study may be the first of its kind in business and entrepreneurship. Despite decades of research on business education, there is little data on whether faculty and students have a common understanding of students' career intentions and motivations, or shared beliefs about entrepreneurship motives and barriers.

To study the possible gap in faculty-student perceptions, we survey 3,037 students and faculty in the United States, China, India, Turkey, Belgium, and Spain. We find that the gap is substantial. Faculty and students across six countries frequently have misaligned views about their university environments, whether students are entrepreneurial, students' workplace aspirations, and perceptions of entrepreneurship motives and barriers. The results suggest two particularly important conclusions.

First, student-faculty misalignment merits attention. Student and faculty beliefs and perceptions do not square well. Across countries, whether the subject is the university itself,

students' interests and aspirations, or entrepreneurship motives and barriers, misaligned perceptions are common. Students and faculty disagree—and frequently.

Second, in a related vein, student self-confidence deserves attention. Remarkably, in our study faculty do not make a connection between self-confidence and students' entrepreneurial disposition, even though analysis suggests that the two are strongly related.

In summary, this study of the differences in faculty and student beliefs and perceptions found wide areas of divergence. We believe that further work is need, not only to understand the issue, but to transform higher education to better support the entrepreneurial intentions of students. Current educational norms and methods may not be the most effective way to create more entrepreneurs.

4. Şeşen and Pruett: Gender and entrepreneurship: Perceptions, attitudes, and intentions

There is substantial entrepreneurship literature on the roles of gender, culture, and education, but less work exists on the intersection of those dimensions—there is not much gender-oriented, cross-cultural research on nascent entrepreneurs.

In this study of the intersection of gender, culture, and education, we look at differences in men and women across multiple countries regarding beliefs about education, aspirations and intentions, and entrepreneurship motives and barriers. We survey 1526 university students in the United States, China, Turkey, and Spain. We study people who may be at the beginning of entrepreneurial careers, in contrast to research on surviving entrepreneurs.

We find significant differences between men and women in views of education, entrepreneurial intentions, perceptions of motives and barriers, and in the relationship of motive and barrier perceptions to entrepreneurial intentions. The results raise two particularly important topics.

First, we show that intrinsic and psychological factors are important in forming university student views about entrepreneurship. However, higher education focuses mostly on knowledge and skills specific to fields. Is higher education in general, and entrepreneurship education in particular, missing an extremely important element — a focus on developing students' psychological understanding and confidence?

Second, the results from China provide an interesting exception in a number of the analyses.

They suggest directions for future research in the social construction/innate differences debate over gender differences.