

# Entrepreneurship Education: Attitudes, Workshops, and Internationalization

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**Abstract** — *This paper summarizes seven years of research regarding entrepreneurship education on three distinct yet inter-related topics: faculty and student attitudes and intentions in multiple countries, university-led workshops to support regional entrepreneurship, and the impact of an academic center on internationalizing the curriculum.*

**Keywords** — Students, Faculty, Curriculum, Cross-campus, International

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is about the start-up of new businesses (or the shift of individuals from employment to business ownership). Entrepreneurship has attracted attention from many parties—people entering the workforce or looking for career changes, companies seeking to stimulate internal innovation and business development, and governments at all levels interested in fostering economic growth. Higher education has played a significant role in the growing interest in entrepreneurship, in providing students with conceptual knowledge and analytical tools, and in researching the antecedents, processes, and consequences of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship.

This paper summarizes seven years of research regarding entrepreneurship education on three distinct yet inter-related topics. That work has to date yielded numerous journal publications, conference presentations, and papers now in journal review.

The first topic is attitudes and intentions regarding entrepreneurship among university students and faculty in half a dozen countries. The second topic is the design and impact of university-led community workshops to support regional economic activity, and the third topic is how to effectively internationalize a business curriculum using the administrative structure of a research and teaching center focused on entrepreneurship.

## 2. Three Streams of Work

### 2.1 Student and Faculty Attitudes Regarding Entrepreneurship

This dataset of more than 2,500 survey respondents may be the world's largest study ever of the attitudes of university students and faculty regarding entrepreneurship. We continue to collect additional data and develop new studies based on it. To date, we have collected data in the United States, India, China, Belgium, Spain and, now, Afghanistan. These studies are based on surveys of students and faculty within business schools and across campus. The unique data collected in this work allows us to compare and contrast attitudes, intentions, motives, and perceived barriers across campus and across countries. In addition to confirming certain previous research findings, the stream has made a number of novel findings that shed dramatic new light on the subject.

Our initial work (Pruett, Shinnar & Toney, 2005; Shinnar, Pruett & Toney, 2009) indicated that students and faculty differ substantially in their perceptions, non-business students are widely interested in entrepreneurship education to support their primary area of study, students are more interested in the possibility of business ownership than faculty realize, and there is no significant difference between men and women in terms of entrepreneurial interest.

Subsequently, we assessed the impact of national cultural differences on students' entrepreneurial intentions (Pruett et al., 2007, 2009). Interestingly, cultural differences among college youths play only a minor role in their propensity to pursue business ownership. While students vary across countries in their perceptions of entrepreneurship barriers and motives, they still have fairly similar intentions. Drawing on psychology literature, the construct of self-efficacy has a significant impact on intentions. One of the most interesting conclusions is that Chinese students may face enormous cultural/family tensions when they graduate—many want to build an independent business career, yet those same

students report that their families will, in general, be very opposed to their choice.

Using U.S. and Belgian data, we assessed faculty-student differences (Giacomin et al., 2008). This study reinforced our findings that students are increasingly similar across countries in terms of their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and in terms of their entrepreneurial intentions. However, as in our earlier research, students across countries differ significantly in their perception of the barriers to entrepreneurship and their motives for pursuing it. As before, the perceptions of faculty and students appear misaligned.

The most recent analyses (Giacomin et al., 2010a; 2010b), reinforce our finding of consistent misalignment between student and faculty perceptions across five countries. While faculty may have a more accurate view of the barriers to entrepreneurship that students will face, they also misperceive students' motives and consistently underestimate students' interest in entrepreneurship.

With new data from Afghanistan, we continue this research. In addition to studying a very different cultural-economic environment, we continue at a global level to focus on the apparent lack of differences between men and women, the issue of faculty/student misalignment, and the seemingly diminishing impact that culture has on intentions.

### 2.2 Regional Economic Development Workshops

We developed a regional entrepreneurship education program consisting of inter-linked workshops taught by faculty coupled with executive mentoring and organizational support (Pruett & Toney, 2008). Although entrepreneurship education is offered by various economic development entities, commerce chambers, non-profits, and incubators, there has been little targeted research to guide program design since much of entrepreneurship education research has focused on traditional students.

Data from participants was used to examine the series' impact and test a model of entrepreneurial intentions incorporating social and psychological factors (Pruett, 2011a). Similar to the above-discussed research on college students, we find that: 1) exposure to role models and the strength of family support do not significantly influence intentions; 2) entrepreneurial disposition and workshop participation significantly influence intentions and; 3) in contrast to previous research, there is no significant difference between men and women regarding interest in entrepreneurship. We

also report on participants' perceptions of program effectiveness and the status of their ventures.

### 2.3 Internationalization of the Curriculum

As it becomes increasingly important for a university to consider its purpose and methods (Pruett, 2011b), the issue of internationalization arises. A research/teaching academic center focused on entrepreneurship can be a useful tool in this area since entrepreneurship education spans disciplinary boundaries and is oriented toward support. In a study of how entrepreneurship fosters curriculum internationalization, we discuss the implementation by an academic center of numerous programs and activities (Pruett, Toney & Rowland, 2009). It is framed as a convergence of three factors: internationalization, entrepreneurship, and the rise of academic centers as vehicles for research, teaching, and outreach. That work continues as we develop support for fine and performing arts (Pruett & Rowland, 2009).

## 3. Conclusions

This paper has discussed highlights of three areas of entrepreneurship education research and program development.

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