

Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on the Entrepreneurial Competence of Students in Vocational Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: At the 2014 Summer Davos Forum, China's chief representative introduced the idea of "universal enterprise creation and widespread implementation of scientific and technological innovation," which is intended to stimulate gross domestic product (GDP) and alleviate unemployment. Thus, it is clear that the creation of new companies is a key influence on the progress and prosperity of a country's society. Today, many universities have embarked on business-oriented training programs to enhance the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of their students as a fundamental support for their future successful businesses. However, the discussion of business start-ups by vocational students has remained at a more backward stage, and there is not much literature on the subject. As business programs are increasingly seen as a popular topic for vocational and technical college students to learn how to start a company, it is important to delve deeper into its impact and how it works. This will provide us with practical data to optimize our teaching methods, and give us some valuable research references to guide these technical talents towards their dreams more effectively.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education; Vocational Colleges and Universities; Students' Entrepreneurial Ability

1. Introduction

With the progress of the society and the change of the job market, independent business has been attracting more and more attention from all walks of life, and the whole society has formed a warm atmosphere of "all people start their own business, all people innovate". In addition, because entrepreneurship can effectively reduce the pressure of unemployment, improve the employment structure, enhance social activity and maintain peace and stability, the government attaches great importance to it, not only including the creation of new businesses in the

Government Work Report, but also launching a series of related programs and policies from the top to build a perfect system structure, creating external conditions conducive to individual entrepreneurship. However, we also need to clearly recognize that although the domestic environment (e.g., universal financial services) has a significant impact on entrepreneurship, the number of entrepreneurs and the rate of successful entrepreneurship in China still fall short of the expected goals and actual needs. In particular, college students, as an emerging entrepreneurial force, clearly show a lack of entrepreneurial enthusiasm, an imbalance in the entrepreneurial structure, and a low success rate of entrepreneurship. In addition, we need to be clear that entrepreneurship education in vocational schools also deserves our great attention due to the large number of students in vocational schools and their important role in the field of higher education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneurship Education

After an in-depth research analysis, we found that entrepreneurship education in both education and entrepreneurship has been widely emphasized by experts and has become the main focus of research in their respective disciplines. This review summarizes the various discussions on the antecedents and subsequent influences of entrepreneurship education made by various experts, aiming to provide readers with a more complete understanding of entrepreneurship education research.

2.1.1 Research on the Impact of Antecedent Variables of Entrepreneurship Education

Research on the antecedent elements of entrepreneurship education has focused on exploring how social networks, personality traits, and the business environment influence the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. Initially, Bird (1988) pointed out that members of a community can indirectly stimulate

individuals' entrepreneurial desires through support or example, thus enhancing their motivation and sense of purpose. Similarly, some of our scholars have confirmed that social network support, as an important source of resources, can also serve as a key mental driving force, and that the absence of such support will seriously hamper entrepreneurs' motivation and reduce their chances of success. In addition, some studies have shown that gender can act as a mediator between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention, and that men are usually more enthusiastic than women and are more likely to convert available resources into practical entrepreneurial actions. Finally, Wang Bing and Feng Zijia (2017) conducted an in-depth analysis of 603 recent graduates from a total of 14 universities in Chongqing and Shaanxi provinces, exploring the relationship between individual characteristics, the external environment, and entrepreneurship education in schools. The results show that a strong entrepreneurial concept helps to promote the implementation of entrepreneurship education, so we should focus on cultivating the correct entrepreneurial concepts of college students in terms of the environment in order to better promote the development of entrepreneurship education.

2.1.2 Research on the Impact of Outcome Variables of Entrepreneurship Education

The outcome indicators of innovative enterprise cultivation mainly focus on how to enhance the intention to create enterprises, motivate the creation of new companies, and enhance the understanding of self-management ability. In terms of the association between educational activities for new firm creation and the motivation of its participants, Zhang and colleagues (2014) conducted a study of 494 participants in China and concluded that this type of teaching is effective in promoting students' creativity and significantly increases the likelihood that they may choose to start their own business in the future; on the other hand, Chen Tao and Tang Dan et al. have also investigated the impact of such factors. Tang Dan et al. also explored the link between such factors as personal attributes and personal experiences on the level of business knowledge and potential entrepreneurship of their students. The results suggest that these traits do have an impact on the interactions between the two - for example, men and women respond differently to

such training while in school, and class rank can also lead to changes in this phenomenon, among other things. In addition, according to the theoretical model of Solsvik et al., the team's data supports the hypothesis that entrepreneurial qualities of young people can be significantly improved through the implementation of a series of special courses or programs, and further proves that this type of training can help to cultivate risk-taking among young people and thus facilitate the realization of more creative action plans. In her 2015 article, Lu Qiuping pointed out that entrepreneurship education has a significant effect on improving entrepreneurial intentions, and that entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurial skills are particularly effective in enhancing this effect. She further emphasized that the learning of entrepreneurship courses not only improves individuals' entrepreneurial skills, but also stimulates their entrepreneurial desires. In addition, Zhang Pupil Guang and Gao Jianjun (2017) experimentally verified how entrepreneurship education affects entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial goal setting. The study showed that entrepreneurship education does strengthen entrepreneurs' feelings of mindset, motivation, and environment. Regarding the exploration of entrepreneurial self-confidence, the study by Hui Xu and Hao Li (2019) showed that entrepreneurship education has the potential to have a significant impact on an individual's entrepreneurial confidence and serves as an intermediary link connecting entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial aspirations. As for the association between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial self-confidence, the study of Han Likuang and Fu Hong (2014) has confirmed that they show a positive correlation: that is, the higher the intensity of entrepreneurship education, the greater the entrepreneurial self-confidence of college students, which also implies that entrepreneurship education helps to promote the entrepreneurial self-confidence of the students, which in turn promotes their entrepreneurial determination.

2.2 Entrepreneurial Behavior

2.2.1 The concept of entrepreneurial behavior

According to Krueger and Carsrud (1993), entrepreneurs, due to the limitations of their own resources, must seek entrepreneurial opportunities in order to overcome such

limitations and achieve their entrepreneurial goals. Similarly, McMullen and Shepherd (2006) emphasized that entrepreneurial actions are not unidirectional behaviors but consist of a series of actions designed to assist entrepreneurs in accomplishing the entrepreneurial goals they have set, the execution of which is highly dependent on the entrepreneur's entrepreneurial determination and perceived entrepreneurial opportunities. In addition, Zhang Yuli (2008) further points out that entrepreneurial behavior is actually a process of resource integration, which is mainly achieved by means of relevant entrepreneurial resources obtained through various means such as accumulation, recombination and utilization. For the understanding of entrepreneurial behavior, we refer to and collate the views of previous scholars, see Table 2-5 for details. on this basis, we define entrepreneurial behavior as a sequence of actions stemming from entrepreneurial opportunities and entrepreneurial aspirations that entrepreneurs take in order to achieve their entrepreneurial goals, which does not only refer to owning a new business, but also any relevant steps involved in the creation of a company are regarded as entrepreneurial behaviors taking place.

2.2.2 Dimensions and Measurement of Entrepreneurial Behavior

Experts across the globe hold different views regarding the hierarchical classification of entrepreneurial activities, and various tiers of assessment methods have been recognized. Various researchers have provided diverse gradations and interpretations of entrepreneurial activities based on their own themes and perspectives. Mike Liu (2018) measured entrepreneurial action by using entrepreneurial opportunity discovery and entrepreneurial opportunity innovation as a double standard, with the former focusing more on finding existing entrepreneurial opportunities and the latter focusing on creating new business opportunities out of nothing.

2.2.3 Research on the impact of antecedent variables on entrepreneurial behavior

Established research results reveal environmental factors, entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial intention as antecedents that drive entrepreneurial actions. According to Cui Bin (2011), environmental conditions limit entrepreneurial choices after college graduation, and this set of specific environmental elements

includes: entrepreneurial personality traits, family atmosphere, and school upbringing, among others, with parental support in particular having the most pronounced impact. Many other articles have also reached similar results, i.e., environmental factors have a critical influence on entrepreneurial activity. Also, some studies have shown that entrepreneurial skills can effectively drive the initiation of entrepreneurial activities. According to Hu Huaimin and Xiao Jianzhong (2007), the core factor of entrepreneurial success lies in an individual's resource advantage, which is crucial in determining the strength of entrepreneurial ability, and thus whether the entrepreneurial behavior unfolds or not. In addition, Ji Lei and Yan Ying (2017) found through their study that social networks can positively and significantly affect the entrepreneurial aptitude of young employees, with various aspects of the index exerting different utility, especially in the use of entrepreneurial resources, such as informal resources. The results of Ye Zheng and Zheng Jianzhuang's study show their unique insights: they found new associations on the factors influencing entrepreneurial behavior compared to other studies. The study reveals that entrepreneurs in cluster firms are more prominent in cognitive ability, opportunity-seeking ability, and resource management, i.e., the enhancement of these abilities enhances their entrepreneurial action; at the same time, the degree of interconnectedness of entrepreneurial cognitive ability, opportunity-seeking ability, and resource management is also correlated with their own, in other words, if one of them is improved, the other two will grow accordingly; furthermore, entrepreneurial cognitive ability, opportunity-seeking ability, and resource management will increase accordingly; in addition, entrepreneurial cognitive ability will increase accordingly. In addition, the strength of the relationship between entrepreneurial cognitive ability and resource management as well as the increase of network density can promote the further development of these two abilities.

2.3 Entrepreneurial Willingness

2.3.1 Research on the Influence of Antecedent Variables of Entrepreneurial Willingness

Environmental conditions, personal characteristics, self-competence, and

entrepreneurial education are key determinants of entrepreneurial willingness.

Regarding the social network included in the environmental elements, scholars have explored it in depth. Rajman's (2011) findings reveal the correlation between social network and entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial intentions, and he found that when there are entrepreneurs in entrepreneurs' groups of relatives and friends, this phenomenon greatly enhances their entrepreneurial desires. Similarly, Yanhong Wang and Yuejun Yang et al. (2015) concluded from their analysis of the factors influencing the entrepreneurial tendencies of college students that the entrepreneurial atmosphere of the university showed a positive relationship with the entrepreneurial aspirations of students, that is to say, these external conditions helped to increase the entrepreneurial enthusiasm of the students. This study further confirms that entrepreneurial decision-making is significantly influenced by the external environment and that an optimized environment is effective in motivating entrepreneurs to start a business. Franke and Lüthje (2004) focused on how contextual factors affect entrepreneurial motivation, and noted that contextual supportive factors, such as the level of cultural and economic development, significantly increased entrepreneurial intentions, whereas on the other hand, unfavorable environmental factors weakened the entrepreneurial intentions of university students. unfavorable environmental factors weakened their entrepreneurial motivation. In addition, the research results of Chen and Greene et al. (1998) also emphasized that the higher the self-confidence of entrepreneurs, the stronger their entrepreneurial willingness; conversely, high entrepreneurial confidence and strong entrepreneurial plans are mutually reinforcing. For the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial willingness, the academic research results are basically the same. That is to say, entrepreneurship education is the main factor influencing college students' entrepreneurship. Various types of entrepreneurship education activities implemented by schools can significantly improve college students' entrepreneurial intentions and also enhance their entrepreneurial skills.

2.3.2 Research on the Impact of Outcome Variables of Entrepreneurial Aspirations

The current main focus on entrepreneurial aspirations is the process of transforming them into actual actions. When we explore entrepreneurial aspirations, we are always seeking to find ways to realize it. Bird (1988) pointed out that an individual's entrepreneurial desires have a very high predictive ability for the individual to actually take entrepreneurial actions. The importance of pre-planning for entrepreneurial activities was emphasized by Xiu'e Zhang and Kun Zhang (2016), who argued that if a person does not have a strong entrepreneurial desire, even if he or she has an ideal entrepreneurial environment, he or she will not be able to make a critical impact and thus it will be difficult to promote entrepreneurial activities. Xu and Tang (2014) hold a similar view, but with a difference in their perspective: there is a motivating factor between entrepreneurial aspirations and entrepreneurial behaviors, which can drive an individual to start an entrepreneurial venture, like a catalyst in chemistry, and as long as the environment meets this requirement, it can easily facilitate the transformation of entrepreneurial aspirations into reality, and conversely, it may prevent entrepreneurial behaviors from occurring. By analyzing the impact of entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions on students' entrepreneurial aspirations, Tan Liwen and Cao Wenxiang et al. (2015) found that students' entrepreneurial aspirations are actually a matter of belief, i.e., the belief that they can succeed in creating a new business. Although entrepreneurial desire is not a key element of entrepreneurial behavior, yet it is a prerequisite for initiating entrepreneurial behavior. Based on the available research data, entrepreneurial behavior is undoubtedly regarded as a major resultant manifestation of entrepreneurial aspirations.

2.4 Entrepreneurship

2.4.1 Conceptualization of Entrepreneurial Capabilities

While "competence" is generally understood to refer to the skills or qualities a person has to perform a certain task, Man and Lau et al. (2008) view it as the power of an entrepreneur to successfully realize his or her goals and put them into practice. The academic discussion of entrepreneurial capabilities is usually divided into two levels: the individual perspective and the firm perspective. The former emphasizes that

entrepreneurial competence is not something that can be learned, but rather an innate talent; however, this notion is not widely accepted, and many experts tend to believe that entrepreneurial competence is not only innate, but can also be enhanced through training. In short, just because there is an innate entrepreneurial potential does not mean that we can't improve our entrepreneurial skills through hard work. Similarly, from a business perspective, Arthurs and Busenitz (2008) state that entrepreneurship lies in the ability to identify opportunities and realize them, i.e., to seek out business opportunities in order to obtain the necessary resources. In China, there are also some scholars discussing this issue, and their views do not go beyond the above framework. For example, Tang Jing and Jiang Yanfu (2008) empirically demonstrated that four competencies of an organization, namely, strategy planning, network building, reputation building and loyalty maintenance, constitute the key elements of entrepreneurial capability. Focusing on the individual's perspective, in this dissertation, we define entrepreneurial capability as an aptitude with the ability to efficiently accomplish entrepreneurial projects, covering aspects such as resource integration, team building, and financing readiness, with a special focus on the ability to coordinate resources.

2.4.2 Research on Antecedent Variables of Entrepreneurial Ability

The exploration of innovative ability can be divided into two directions: one is based on individual analysis; the other is based on organizational summary. Many experts tend to believe that innovativeness is an innate trait of a person, which is difficult to be improved through later training. For example, Clarysse and Tartari et al. (2011) conducted an in-depth investigation through the perspective of genes, and found that differences in genes can clearly distinguish individuals with different opportunity recognition abilities, so they advocate that innovativeness is determined by innate, which is known as the "entrepreneurial". This is known as the "essentialist perspective", which emphasizes how genetic traits, personality traits, geography, etc. shape innovativeness. However, a number of empirical studies have shown that innovativeness can be improved through later learning from an organizational perspective, and this view is predominantly held by scholars. For example, Karra and Phillips et

al. (2008) suggest that entrepreneurial opportunities arise from entrepreneurial sensitivity, and that highly astute entrepreneurs are more likely to perceive potential business opportunities and seize them, leading to success. In addition, Ni Feng and Hu Xiao'e (2007) confirmed that entrepreneurs' family background plays an important role in their individual awareness, while their level of knowledge also directly affects their ability to innovate. Finally, the findings of Buy Yiyuan and Gan Zhilong (2008) show that regional entrepreneurship education and training system is positively correlated with the innovation capability of that place, that is to say, if the education and training mechanism is more complete and efficient in a certain place, then the entrepreneurs there will have a higher innovation capability.

2.4.3 Research on Outcome Variables of Entrepreneurial Capabilities

Research on the outcome factors of initial business competence has mainly focused on the two areas of business activity and business efficiency. According to Obschonka et al. (2011), this competence and its impact can effectively determine the probability of a firm's success. Similarly, GUOHai in his 2011 article states that this skill can also significantly increase the likelihood of business opportunities and thus further drive performance growth. In addition, MALAN in her 2019 article presents a new theoretical framework on how new creative MSMEs can achieve higher development efficiency by utilizing this technique and conducts a practical test on it; the results of the experiment show that this technique does have a positive effect and that it directly contributes to the development of small and medium-sized businesses and is an effective intermediary tool to get them to their target value faster. ZHANGXiu-e and ZHAOMin-hui, in their 2017 article, systematically summarize the latest developments in this area, including case studies, which confirm the fact that - "This method does indeed work. "This approach does help to increase the survival chances of small or medium-sized small or large organizations."

2.5 Factors Affecting Entrepreneurship

In recent years, research on college students' innovative ability and entrepreneurial desire has received great attention. By exploring how entrepreneurship education affects the innovation ability of students in vocational and

technical colleges, Zhang He (2023) clarified the key role of education and training in enhancing innovativeness. Similarly, Wei Guoyan (2023) delved into farmers' motivation to return to their hometowns to start their own businesses and its related elements in the context of rural revitalization, specifying in particular the important impact of social conditions and policy environment on their entrepreneurial aspirations. In addition, Ouyang Sheng et al. (2023) discuss the spatial gap in entrepreneurial standards and its causes in cities in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, revealing the importance of geographic location on entrepreneurial activities. While Qian Na and Zhou Xiangjie (2023) focused on exploring the determinants of entrepreneurial success among college students and their practical approaches, sharing some specific cases and methods of successful entrepreneurship. Finally, Yang Jian (2023) studied the factors related to the entrepreneurial intentions of STI personnel from their perspective and proposed a series of improvement measures, which further highlighted the influence of the scientific and technological background in stimulating entrepreneurial enthusiasm. All in all, all of the above research results show that the driving force of entrepreneurial activities involves a variety of elements such as education, social environment, geographic location, experiences, and skills, which together form the basis of an individual's entrepreneurial awareness and capabilities. This body of research provides a lot of valuable insights for us to better understand and promote entrepreneurship among college students.

3. Conclusion

The existing articles on innovative pedagogical approaches are vast and informative, discussing not only the reasons and effects that drive this new way of learning, but also analyzing in depth the business value and social benefits it generates. Most of these articles recognize and emphasize the enormous benefits of excellent creative thinking; they also offer many useful ideas on how to effectively deliver such courses. However, despite the large amount of material exploring the effectiveness and scope of the subject, the vast majority of it focuses on attitudes or motivations at the initial creative stage, with few examples at the practical level. This suggests that we need to learn more about

the importance of this issue and its practice from the perspective of students in vocational colleges. Therefore, the main concern of this research is to explore the financial benefits of novel thinking patterns. Based on the various theoretical results mentioned earlier, we can consider novel ideas as solutions or pre-conditions for problems in other fields. Given that our goal is to assess the impact of such training programs in higher vocational and technical schools, it makes sense that we would choose "creative action" as an important measure (since it is thought to directly improve business performance). Undoubtedly, in this study we have focused on exploring the intermediate factors that influence the relationship between innovative activities. This section details the terminology, measurement methods, existing state of research and its associated research reviews related to keywords in entrepreneurship such as entrepreneurship training, innovation action, innovation intention and innovation skills, etc., which provide the theoretical cornerstone for our subsequent work and refer to the results of previous theoretical studies to determine the meanings and categorization criteria of several key elements we are concerned with in this study.

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