

Responsible Entrepreneurship Education: Emerging Research and Opportunities

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*Those who understand others are clever,
Those who understand themselves are wise.
Those who defeat others are strong,
Those who defeat themselves are mighty.*

*Those who know when they have enough are rich.
Those who are unswerving have resolve.
Those who stay where they are will endure.
Those who die without being forgotten get longevity.*

Lao-Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Chapter 33, The Virtue of Judgement

Preface

This text is born with the intent to provide food for thoughts on the responsible entrepreneurship education and on the importance of lifelong learning to constantly update the knowledge required for entrepreneurs. The audience of the present book is mostly represented by curricula developers, educators and researcher in education. However, even entrepreneurs and managers will find a set of useful insights and list of skill and competencies that are related to their jobs and suitable for personal growth and company's internal growth agenda.

Therefore, we need to ask to ourselves if entrepreneurs are born or made? The most recent literature on the subject of the entrepreneurship has debated on this apparently simple question in order to try to give a commonly accepted explanation. We are still very far from a final formalization of such apparently intangible concept but which has a very strong impact on the economic well-being of a nation. Being able to define such a complex phenomenon in an unequivocal way is certainly a hard task, but it has developed a growing, sometimes massive, interest in the last twenty years. To date, the literature, drawing inspiration from psychology, has focused particularly on trying to understand the reason for the activation of an entrepreneurship behavior and the factors that can influence it. In fact, being able to understand these variables can make it possible to encourage successful entrepreneurial behavior even in apparently passive individuals.

It is worth recalling that the subject of entrepreneurship does not end with the creation of a start-up or in pursuing an already consolidated economic reality, but manifests itself in everyday life, from the retailer who decides to experiment with a new business model in response to the drop in sales, up to the worker who decides to resign to open an own business.

The European Union has realized the importance of this value and in recent years, especially in the north of our continent, very important steps have been taken towards the teaching of this subject/attitude. The European report "Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe" has indeed analyzed data from 31 EU countries demonstrating that nowadays a third of EU countries promotes entrepreneurial training programs and set them as compulsory both in primary and secondary schools. Due to the serious lack of education in this area in some member states, Europe has been promoting, through the

"Europe 2020" agenda, several initiatives aimed at integrating this thematic into the social fabric since early adolescence.

The creation of educational programs in this sense, however, cannot be limited to a theoretical education because, as we said and we will repeat, entrepreneurship is a behavior and as such it arises from the presence of many personality traits and both technical and relational-humanistic skills.

The literature has identified this problem quite recently and it is still quite lacking on this issue, some paradigms of references to develop teaching paths are present but none of these has been strongly validated through a significant sample.

The aim of this work is therefore to first analyze the research contributions in the field of entrepreneurial training and then to investigate the concept of knowledge and creativity in this context.

In this view, we will deep the study of psychological literature to try to understand what may be the internal pushes that activate an entrepreneurship behavior in an individual aimed at breaking the conceptual patterns and habitual behaviors in order to achieve a goal of greater personal and economic well-being. In doing so, the present text is based on several well established theoretical frameworks that comes from psychology, philosophy and pedagogy. In particular, we used among the others the model of Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) , Kolb (1984), Ciappei (2005), and Hood & Young (1993).

Thus, in the last part of this study, we present a detailed analysis of thirty-eight skills identified as fundamental for the entrepreneur, ranging from purely technical qualities to personality and moral orientations.

Lastly, the work focuses on empirical validation, through the use of a quantitative research carried out on some students, so to understand the perception they have of certain identified qualities.

Then, we would like first to acknowledge our colleagues at the University of Florence, University of Rome 'Tor Vergata', University of Lincoln, University of Zagreb, Princess Sumaya University for Technology, University of Alicante, University of Macerata, University of Naples 'Parthenope', University of Sevilla, University of Queensland, and George Washington University for useful exchanges of views during the last years. We are also grateful to the members of the UNESCO Chair in Responsible Foresight for Sustainable Development at the University of Lincoln. Finally, we thank Prof Dana and Prof Ciappei for the kind words written about our work.

References for Preface

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