

The 'mystery' of entrepreneurship and innovation

Dr. Reza Zaefarian
Dr. Ghanbar M. Elyasi
Dr. Misagh Tasavori

Book Review- Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development

While in the past large and established organizations were considered the key players in economic development, recent evidence illustrates that small and medium-sized enterprises can also contribute to the economic growth of the regions in which they are located. When launching and developing their businesses, entrepreneurs interact with the environment, and contribute to the economic fortunes and development, of their region. Entrepreneurship, innovation and regional development are the focus of a recently published book by Professor Jay Mitra. He is the founding Professor of Business Enterprise and Innovation and Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship Research at Essex Business School, the University of Essex. He is also Director of the Scientific Committee on Entrepreneurship for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in France and Italy and has held visiting professorships at Fudan and Jilin Universities in China and a research fellowship at the Beijing University of Foreign Studies, also in China. Building upon the breadth of his experiences around the world, Mitra puts together the three related concepts of entrepreneurship, innovation and regional development to elaborate the 'mystery' of entrepreneurship and innovation and demonstrate how they contribute to the social and economic welfare.

The author believes that opportunity identification and exploitation lie at the heart of entrepreneurship and innovation. As a result, he starts the book with an introduction to the concept of opportunity, but focuses on how it is linked to the region and the environment, arguing that the environment in which an entrepreneur resides facilitates the identification of opportunity and the creation of new ventures. Once an entrepreneur has developed an idea that can make use of the opportunity they have identified, they establish an organization that gives life to their innovative initiatives. It is important for entrepreneurs to learn about the organizational characteristics that will foster and support their entrepreneurial initiatives. Therefore, one chapter of the book is dedicated to the structures and processes that should be in place in entrepreneurial organizations. In addition to the organization, a successful entrepreneurial initiative would not be possible without the existence of an environment conducive to the creation and growth of new ventures. Some of the key factors in an environment are, for example, institutions and a culture which facilitate or hinder the establishment of alliances and the development of networks. Regional government, institutions and

decision makers at the regional level also play a crucial role in the economic prosperity and success of entrepreneurs. The regional investments of governments can, for example, create appropriate infrastructures for entrepreneurship and innovation. The role of the environment and the interaction of the entrepreneur with the environment are thus explained in some chapters of the book. Entrepreneurs will repeat their mistakes unless they learn from them. The importance of learning is well explained in Chapter 7 of the book. International environments have opened a new avenue for entrepreneurial organizations as they enable organizations to enhance their innovative capabilities in the international arena. Research and development is also vital to the success of entrepreneurial firms. This leads the author to point out the role of universities and higher education institutions in the promotion of entrepreneurship. Universities have a good understanding of the historical capabilities of the region and can help entrepreneurs to build upon them and consequently contribute to regional development.

The role of governmental policies is not neglected in the book; the author indicates how, why and when effective policies can help to create an entrepreneurial environment. In short, the book argues that the creation and growth of new ventures in a given environment is dependent on environmental factors and that the environment contributes to a region's capacity to achieve entrepreneurial development.

The book draws upon three key concepts in the field and provides a better understanding of each of these concepts, separately and in relation to each other. It presents entrepreneurship, innovation and regional development by reviewing recent academic findings in this area. It is therefore a useful book for anyone wishing to gain a concise overview of the key theories and arguments. Readers of this book will gain a good knowledge of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial organizations, entrepreneurial learning, the role of institutions and government policies, and how entrepreneurs contribute to and benefit from regional development. The comprehensive overview this book provides of the topics it covers makes it a good candidate for use as a reference in teaching postgraduate students in universities all around the world.

“Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development” is built upon critical theories and concepts, to support the discussion in each chapter and inform the reader about different scenarios of entrepreneurship and innovation. This is accompanied by references, activities, events and ideas from all around the world, to reflect the global character of entrepreneurship. Mini case studies in most of the chapters give a flavor of practical experiences to the theoretical arguments.

However, despite the variety of topics in the book, and in contrast with many other books in the field, the author does not highlight the role of the entrepreneur as a person who initiates the process

of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is built upon four concepts—entrepreneur, opportunity, environment and organization—as a means to exploit opportunity. Entrepreneurship will occur only when a good opportunity in an appropriate environment is seized by the right person and pursued by an entrepreneurial organization. Environment is also critical in fostering entrepreneurs. While this book discusses opportunity, organization and environment well, the role of the entrepreneur is missing, which could be considered in future editions. It should be noted that there are many books focusing on entrepreneurs and their characteristics. However, the interaction between the entrepreneur, the creation of innovation and the role of environment is not often addressed.

Another issue that should be pointed out is the breadth of topics that are mentioned in the book. Although this does bring advantages, it also prevents detailed and profound analysis in some areas.

Overall, the book captures very well the state-of-the-art knowledge of the relations between entrepreneurship, innovation and regional development, and is a must-read for both academics and practitioners.

Dr. Reza Zaefarian, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Entrepreneurship, University of Tehran

Dr. Ghanbar M. Elyasi, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Entrepreneurship, University of Tehran

Dr. Misagh Tasavori, Lecturer, Essex Business School, University of Essex