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ORCHESTRATING INTERCULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAMMES: A MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE ATTEMPT

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Abstract

Although intercultural diversity is an important regulator of entrepreneurship, there is a dearth of studies that explore its influence on the interaction between entrepreneurship education programmes design and startup creation process's actors. Previous studies mainly devoted attention to examine intercultural diversity's effects on teams' dynamics spotlighting its relationship with leadership, virtual working and organizations' performance. In this vein and drawing on national cultural and organizational change, this study aims at investigating the intercultural diversity's role in influencing the entrepreneurship education programmes design configurations and networks. Drawing on a single case study, we conduct semi-structured interviews gathered from 42 multicultural and heterogeneous teams, advisors and organizers of BESTMEDGRAPE, an entrepreneurship education programme involving five Mediterranean countries which followed nascent entrepreneurs all along the startup creation process. The contribution of this study is to conceptualize the interplay between intercultural diversity, entrepreneurship education programme and startup dynamics by generating new dimensions that crystallize the relationship between entrepreneurship education and organizational ecosystems.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education programmes, Intercultural diversity, Startup creation process, Case study

1 Introduction

The continual increase in the number of individuals relocating temporarily or permanently to all regions of the world has a significant impact on the multicultural composition of organizations. This epochal shift is causing fundamental changes in the organizations configurations, which are becoming more diversified and heterogeneous (Kayar and Kozak, 2010). The rise of multicultural families, institutions inviting foreign students, and organizations integrating staff from other cultures are just a few instances of how intercultural diversity may have an influence on communities. Furthermore, globalization, migration, and regional and organizational integration are only a few of the possible causes of this dramatic demographic change (Repečkienė, Kvedaraitė and Jankauskienė, 2011). The use of information and communication technology by multicultural teams challenged the way of doing business by organizations (Shachaf 2008). As a matter of fact, IS innovation is reinforcing organizational changes. These changes could be management oriented or improvements adopted at the work place (Avgerou 2000). In this scenario, intercultural diversity examined from many angles becomes also a basic notion for comprehending phenomena associated to the development and creation of new companies and entrepreneurship education programmes (EEP), as well as the factors that promote their birth, growth, and evolution throughout the organizational life cycle.

The influence of shifting demographic character and intercultural diversity is dual in nature. Previous research has shown that a wider diversity of information and cultural features may contribute to an increase in people's creativity while other research, focused on organizational ecosystems and change (Hanelt et al. 2021) theories connected to coordination, emphasize the negative features that link intercultural diversity to increasing conflict in organizations and workplaces (Levine and Moreland, 2004; Paulus and Nijstad, 2003; O'Reilly, Williams and Barsade, 1998). In other words, intercultural diversity in healthy frameworks offers several benefits whereas in complex ones it pushes individuals to face new challenges creating consequently new dynamics (Levine and Moreland, 2004).

According to Fleury (1999), diversity is an umbrella concept defined as a mixture of people holding different group identities among the same social system and it should involve for instance demographic differences among individuals (McGrath, Berdahl and Arrow, 1995), or national cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011; 1980). Specifically, the theoretical foundations of intercultural diversity literature, deals with and focuses on power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long versus short term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 2011).

In recent times, intercultural diversity studies infiltrated the world of entrepreneurship given its potential utility and richness in terms of clarifying the EEP and startup dynamics. In this vein, enabling people interacting between each other and comprehending the surrounding dynamics on how it affects intra-teams and relationships can be crucial (Dameron and Joffre, 2007). EEPs, as pedagogical programmes, are continuously changing (Fayolle, Gailly and Lassas-Clerc, 2006) likewise startups are continuously evolving thanks to the embedded technologies (Volkoff, Strong, and Elmes 2007). EEP differ in terms of focus and objectives, teaching approaches, know-how, number of phases and output (Salamzadeh and Kesim, 2017).

Within entrepreneurship education programmes literature, the impact of intercultural diversity in terms of participants or architectural configuration of the teaching design needs further exploration. For instance, some authors highlight the potential link with the three stages creation process suggested by Bhave (1994) or the one by Salamzadeh (2015), others for the five stages developed by Galbraith (1982) or the ten stages model presented by Block and MacMillan (1985). Besides of startup business creation design (Tsai and Lan, 2006), the startup sector (Bastié, Cieply and Cussy, 2013), asset structure (Mann and Sanyal, 2012), growth orientation (Berger and Udell, 2005) and operational decisions restrictions by financial considerations (Berger and Udell, 2005) are part of the startup dynamics that characterize new ventures (Salamzadeh and Kesim, 2017).

Given the absence of studies about the conceptual link between intercultural diversity in the entrepreneurship life cycles, regrettably, much needs to be done. Consequently, this study aims at clarifying

intercultural diversity's impact on the startup dynamics and EEP design. Based on the explorative nature of the gap, this study adopts a single case study method; an EEP involving a group of Mediterranean countries (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt, 1989). The study uses this method to explore a real-life, contemporary bounded system over the period of the EEP, through detailed, in-depth data collection taking through numerous sources of information (Creswell 2009).
Through BESTMEGRAPE description, this study offers a framework that explains the interplay between intercultural diversity, EEPs design, and startup dynamics, highlighting the different impacts that one exercises on the other and offering fine-grained insights into the role of interactionist floating managerial figures. Other than the managerial implications, this framework might serve as a basis for future theoretical and empirical research, providing entrepreneurship education programmes' designers with new best practices that are essential when designing intercultural programmes facing a severe crisis like COVID-19, and so distinguished by a critical role for information technology as a result of the existence of both online and in-person hybrid interactions.
This paper is structured as follows; the theoretical background section starts by defining the concept of EEP and its taxonomies. Then, the paper defines diversity in terms of demographic and cultural differences. Furthermore, it defines culture, presenting three types of dimensions. It highlights Hofstede (2011)'s dimensions that are used to construct the study's model. The theoretical background closes by defining different startup dynamics. Then, the methodological section describes the rationale behind the selection of the case study, its justification and the ways followed for the collection of data. Last but not least, in the final sections, the paper provides the results of the study, the theoretical framework and the managerial implications.

2 Theoretical background

"Whether it be variations in intentions, justice, negotiation, or leadership, the cross-cultural literature focuses seldom on whether and how cultural differences truly effect intercultural encounters" (Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007). Moreover, we are confronted with an epoch-defining shift in which the number of people traveling and migrating for study and employment is continually expanding and forcing the globe towards changes in organizations (Volkoff, Strong, and Elmes 2007) and their increasingly complex, diverse, and heterogeneous interactions (Kayar and Kozak, 2010; Bove and Elia, 2017). In this context, the interplay between the design of EEPs, the support for the processes of developing creative startups and the importance of intercultural diversity becomes more explicit and demands further theorization. Following is a quick summary of the aforementioned literary works and their conceptual evolutions.

2.1 Entrepreneurship Education Programmes

EEPs started to gain more interest from scholars since the last two decades (Kuratko 2005). Learning pathways are not only focused on the formation of new businesses; rather, they are characterized as pedagogical processes of education for entrepreneurial attitudes and abilities, which include the development of certain human attributes. Consequently, this definition encompasses a broad range of circumstances, objectives, techniques, and teaching-approaches" (Alain Fayolle, Gailly, and Lassas-Clerc 2006). In this respect, the major purpose of EEPs is to provide participants with something that eliminates the impediments that tend to paralyze them. In actuality, these hurdles emerge when entrepreneurship education programs fail to improve the self-esteem, awareness, and self-confidence of individuals. Education in entrepreneurship emphasizes the competencies and information that aspiring entrepreneurs need to fulfill their business requirements (Lay and Khoo, 2012). Significantly, EEPs aim to provide the exact degree of attitude and motivation towards entrepreneurship ("know why"), to emphasize the significance of socializing and networking ("know who"), and to emphasize the significance of having the reflex to act at the right time ("know when"), as well as the ability to acquire the basic knowledge required to excel in the new business ("know what"), and the technical capabilities and skills needed t o succeed in the new business ("know how") (Othman and Nasrudin, 2016). These types of programs are roughly same as they concentrate on enhancing participants' abilities via "learn-

ing-by-doing experiential learning" while working in teams with the ultimate goal of presenting a business proposal (Fiore, Sansone and Paolucci, 2019). From a macro perspective, EEPs play a crucial role as a policy for territorial and social economic growth (Kent 1990).

Thus, there are several factors that may and should influence the development of an entrepreneurial education program. The structure's stages of the program, the methods and purpose of the training, the participants' characteristics, and the involved surrounding organizational actors partners. The decisions made by the designers define the organizational architecture and program settings, and have an effect on EEPs' performance and participants' goal attainment (Loi, Castriotta and Di Guardo, 2016). Regarding how to organize a learning pathway, participants need to go through some phases that are predefined at the beginning of each programme. The phases generally consist in the formation stage where the participant is invited to get the knowledge and skills needed to swept the market, teams' characteristics and an idea about various business transactions. Then comes the development stage where the programme tries to go deeper focusing on business plans, market selection, financial plan and etc. Last but not least, the business implementation stage can be summed up as the transition from the entrepreneur to a new role; a manager of his own startup (Garavan and O′Cinneide, 1994). Other entrepreneurship scholars preferred calling the stage as motivation phase that aims to encourage the participants to brainstorm and select the most suitable business idea developing a business model, followed by the planning phase to get prepared to launch the organization. Finally, the establishment phase, the participants start detecting problems but also solutions. They start concentrating on operations and team networking (Greve and Salaff, 2008). Another possible nomination of the stages could be under the entrepreneurial learning phases as follows; inspiring and engaging that is characterized by generating new original ideas then experimenting and developing that has the objective to bring innovative business ideas to life. It is a two stages process that lasts six months in some programmes, one month in others where they develop a general business model of innovative solution (Secundo, Mele, Sansone and Paolucci, 2020).

Regarding the purposes of EEPs entrepreneurial skills must involve three attributes of entrepreneurship; the market opportunity identification and business idea generation, the engagement towards the opportunity no matter of the risk and the establishment of an operating business organization to implement the idea. Moreover, these programmes should involve a business planning, training practice and support offered by universities of the countries involved in order to obtain more enterprising, innovative and self-reliant students. In this vein, Bronte-Tinkew et al.(2002) mentioned three main avenues that an institution must work on to offer the best of entrepreneurial potential to students; self-perception, education preparation and socialization. They work hand in hand with entrepreneurship programmes improving the offered contents, providing facilities and a convenient infrastructure in addition to better methods of the enrollment of the program, and a good allocation of time (Othman and Nasrudin, 2016). Pathways for entrepreneurial education may include a varying number of organizations and students. Architectures may be as simple as those involving particular institutions or universities with students of the same age or background. Other routes may include a greater number of organizations, or perhaps whole entrepreneurial ecosystems, as well as students with diverse characteristics. The main two actors of the EEPs are basically students and teachers. Students are considered as "active participant with a strong interaction with teachers" and teachers are mainly tutor, mentor and facilitator. Furthermore, there are other actors from the entrepreneurial ecosystem that intervene all along the journey of the programme; such as student-led entrepreneurial organizations, public agencies and organizations, corporations, junior enterprises, visionaries, Fablabs and incubators (Fiore, Sansone, and Paolucci 2019).

The architecture of an entrepreneurial education program influences its performance. In this vein, scholars presented a list of criteria to evaluate them. These criteria consist in the number of courses offered by the program, the number of publications by teachers, the impacts on the community, the number of startups created by potential entrepreneurs, innovations, alumni startups, outreach to scholars, gained competitions and awards, years of activity, size of MBA program, halo of school or university, magnitude of resources, alumni comments years later, size of undergrad program incoming stu-

dent qualities, size of doctoral program, faculty startups and locations; these are the most important criteria for ranking. When it comes to educational programmes, the classical scenario is to evaluate the knowledge acquired and like this check the degree of the participants' comprehension and understanding (Fayolle and Klandt, 2006). The interest, awareness and intentions are also factors that are measurable. "Attendance rates, participation and student motivations are the classical criteria for measuring satisfaction, and evaluations or measurements taken during and shortly after the training are also important, in that they can help identify variations and progress in performance levels (project management, teamwork, creative capacity, and so on)" (Fayolle and Klandt, 2006).

2.2 Intercultural Diversity

Despite the fact that global situations are becoming more heterogeneous, more intellectual effort is required to examine how cross-cultural diversity interacts with the design processes of entrepreneurial education programmes, communities, and entrepreneurial ecosystems (Karlsson, Rickardsson and Wincent, 2021). The diversity concept was subsequently defined by Fleury (1999) as a mixture of people holding different group identities among the same social system. Diversity characterizes a couple of people or more and generally it is about demographic differences among individuals (McGrath, Berdahl, and Arrow 1995). In the literature, scholars issued several dimensions for classifying these differences, declaring different outcomes for teams' individuals taking into consideration the nature and intensity of those differences. In fact, scholars shed the light on the effects of diversity in relation with cultural differences (Cox, 1993; Larkey, 1996), physical ones (Stangor et al., 1992), role-related (Maznevski, 1994; Pelled, 1996) or inherent and immutable distinctions (Maznevski 1994).
Daft (2003) chose to split diversity into two axes; basic dimensions and secondary dimensions putting it through a dual differentiation. The basic dimensions consist in race, ethnicity, gender, physical or cognitive capability, concerning differences that are in born or influence single entities all along their journeys; these represent also the main elements structuring perspectives or self-images of individuals. Secondary dimensions are the characteristics which individuals have possessed thanks to their experiences; in other words, the qualities gained through life. These qualities can be modified. Being lesser efficient than the basic dimensions, the secondary ones influence less individuals' self-identity even though it presents how individuals are perceived by others. Some specifications such as individuals' beliefs, marital status, languages, social-economic status, education level, and business experience add new dimensions both to identify themselves and to be identified by others.
All over the last centuries, scholars debated the effects of diversity on numerous attributes and so they deduce that diversity among people induce intergroup bias and engender negative work outcomes (Pelled 1996). On the contrary, others pointed out that diversity provides teams with numerous types of information which offer them several benefits. Moreover, it was seen as a booster of creative problem solving and a producer of fruitful contributions (Cox, Lobel and McLeod, 1991).
In the 1960s, Cultural diversity and minorities started to gain importance from North America – USA and Canada (Raj Isar 2006). This event opened up the doors to the internationalization and diversity in the world of business as a consequence to the issued impediments against racial discrimination observed in companies and academic institutions. Theoretically speaking, the cultural diversity was an organizational answer in face to the rising of diversification of labor force (Jackson, May and Whitney, 1995). In 1980, Berry proposed that cultural identities do not barely define the body of self-representation but also it diagnosis the "frame of reference of for ordering social relationships, and as such is an important element in the daily life of people experiencing intergroup contact and social change" (Berry 1980). Cox (1993) affirms that the latter originally derives from belonging to teams that are socio-culturally distinguishable. They include physical like skin color, stylistic; for example fashion preferences or biological like genetics, characteristics. These groups' members share norms, specific values, perceptions (Alderfer and Smith, 1982), aims and socio-cultural heritage (Cox, 1993). These groups' cultural identifiers can be reported thanks to communication channels, rules, common meaning, dialects or languages which can be denied by others as culturally related (Larkey 1996). The extent to which an individual considers himself belonging to one's cultural identities and the value one attributes to them differs between team members (Cox, 1993; Ely, 1995; Ragins, 1997). Cultural iden-

tity can change shape even in different points of time (Ely, 1995; Larkey, 1996). Cultural identity attributes involve sex, social class, religion, nationality, race, ethnicity and sexual identity. That is why; it is said to be "socially constructed, complex, and dynamic" (Ely and Thomas, 2001).
Hofstede (2011) "dimensionalized" culture. He concluded six dimensions; power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, long/short term orientation, and indulgence/restraint. These dimensions constitute the paradigm for comparing cultures. Culture has been defined in several ways in academic research (Jenks, 1993; Stohl, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Simply, culture has been coined as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede 1991). By power distance, Hofstede (2001) targeted the solutions to the issue of human inequality. He associated the uncertainty avoidance with the degree of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future. Another dimension is individualism versus collectivism, the level of integration of individuals into primary groups. Masculinity versus femininity concerns the differences in emotional roles distinguishing between women and men. Long term versus Short term orientation, related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past. Indulgence versus Restraint, consists in evaluating when it comes to the gratification versus control of individuals' desires associated to enjoying life (Hofstede 2001). Cultural diversity has long been recognized to show both negative and positive effects on team processes and outcomes (Leung and Wang, 2015).

2.3 Startup Dynamics

Each scholar presented its personal understanding of the concept (Salamzadeh and Kesim, 2017). As a matter of fact, there is no unique definition in literature on what constitutes a startup (Paternoster et al., 2014). This explains the fact that scholars did not agree on a unique process that needs to be followed by such kind of ventures (see table 1).

Startup definitions	Authors	Year
"A human institution designed to create new products and services under conditions of extreme uncertainty."	Ries	2011
"Newly born companies which struggle for existence. These entities are mostly formed based on brilliant ideas and grow to succeed."	Salamzadeh and Kesim	2017
"A dynamism of form and merit, which results from functioning in a very unstable, unpredictable environment."	Kopera et al.	2018

Table 1 Startup definitions

In order to understand startups' perceptions, their ways of working and eventually other dynamics, some characteristics need to be studied (Salamzadeh and Kesim, 2017). To start, choosing the right sector is fundamental for the potential entrepreneurs. It is considered as a significant business environmental factor that determines the life expectancy of the startup. Embracing an innovative sector is an evidence that gives new ventures a better reputation and chance at developing and succeeding especially that startups are known by their flexibility and their ability to adapt. Therefore, it is understood that opting for a new type of investments fits more the needs of a new entrepreneurs; to enter new sectors and markets where creative thoughts and innovative ideas are certainly lacking but also desired and where competitors are almost absent as well (Salamzadeh and Kesim, 2017).
Choosing the correct asset structure for an organization is also an important factor for success. In short, startups can be divided in two types: those depending on assets that are more material and physical and others that give more importance to the human capital. In fact, the financial strategy adopted shows the difference between the two categories and the impact of this choice. While the first types are more expected to depend on external credits and debts, the second type rely on intellectual property resources. It is safe therefore to say that this choice should be carefully studied, taking into consideration the organization's sector and the entrepreneur's decision (Salamzadeh and Kesim, 2017).

Then, every firm has to select a growth strategy and stick to it in order to achieve it. To keep it simple, the choice is not automatic; it depends on the sector statues, and the organization's long-term objectives. For high-growth startups in which private equity financing is dominant in earliest stages of its development, debt financing presents a significant role in the capital structure when these organizations move to public. In fact, "high-growth, high-risk new ventures often obtain external equity (e.g., via angel finance or venture capital) before obtaining significant external debt suggests that the moral hazard problem may be particularly acute for these firms" (Berger and Udell, 2005). Whatever the strategy maintained by the startup that is continuously making changes and quickly adapting to sudden events faced by the business environment is much-needed for its survival and progress (Tsai and Lan, 2006).

Startups often rely on financial intermediaries' help to support their expenses; such as commercial banks and finance firms that are specialized in utilizing the contracting instruments in addition to technologies advancements for lending. Equity, also, plays an important role for startup's financing. As a matter of fact, debts are generally paid through percentages of shares. Investors expect shares against their financial contributions (Berger and Udell, 2005).

Actually, startup organizations are mainly formed based on innovative ideas. Through the history, startups have known many startup business creation process designs (Tsai and Lan, 2006). Startups effectuated development and progress regarding its growth process. Therefore, and in order to get a global view and understand better the concept of development of startup creation processes, it is necessary to go through the life cycle theory (Tsai and Lan, 2006). The model presented by Bhave (1994) displays only three stages. The first stage consists in looking for opportunity phase, the second stage related to the technology setup as well as the management and arrangement phase and the third being the trade and exchange phase. In addition, we have a four-stage model created by Kazanjian (1988). The first stage of this type is about the growth and search of a suitable concept. The second is all about advertising and so the third is all about the expansion of business and consequently the stability of the startup as a fourth stage.

Another model involving five-stage is developed by Galbraith (1982) in which he has preserved the first and second phases concerning the setup of a conception model in order to be able to move to the third stage which is the opening of a startup closely followed by its development and growth. The fifth step deals with the importance of strategic aspect and procedures.

Likewise, the ten stages model developed by Block and MacMillan (1985) should be mentioned to cloture the study made upon the life cycle theory. First, the two first steps are quiet the same being related to establishing a product model. Second, the third step is about finding economic resources and getting the market approval through market testing. Therefore, then he moves on to the sixth step that revolves around preparing the first collection of the product and offering it to sale. As a result, the startup will be facing some competitive actions, which brings us to the eighth step. The ninth and the tenth steps are related to readjustment and rearrangements measures of the product's aspects in a first and its price in a second order to overcome the competitiveness. Therefore, we can conclude that all models described above are the same in some ways but are not in others. They all do actually contribute with an added value but with different perspectives (Tsai and Lan, 2006).

All along the process, the activities may vary from one startup to another. According to a more recent literature, Salamzadeh (2015) presented three stages; bootstrapping, seed, creation stages. First, the entrepreneur starts the phase of searching for his most adequate idea. In the world of startups, the level of uncertainty and risk is high. The startup team will be formed and then they will be deciding upon personal contributions in terms of funds. This phase is summed up as the brainstorming and the collect of funds without asking for external help. As a matter of fact, "bootstrapping is a way of life in entrepreneurial companies" (Salamzadeh and Kawamorita, 2015).

Second, he focuses on making several trials to create a prototype in order to be able to enter the market. All over this stage, he does not stop evaluating the venture, he will be busy searching for support mechanisms including incubators, accelerators and partners that believe in the idea and are will to support the startup mainly financially. Generally, this is the phase that has the pick for uncertainty for the majority. Here, the initial capital needs to be identified to create the product or to prepare in order to be able to offer the service. The probability of failing is so high in this phase. This is explained by

the risk of failing to find investors. On the contrary, those that surpass this stage by finding supporters will have a great chance to make profits. This phase is closed by an evaluation (Salamzadeh and Kawamorita, 2015).
Last but not least, the new venture arrives to the point that it is ready to sell its product or provide its specialty service. This implies that it is the moment to hire employees. The startup, physically, exists, starts to gain profits and operates normally establishing its base of faithful clients in the market. It is without doubts, the stage where venture capitalists intervene to facilitate the creation of the startup by offering funding (Salamzadeh and Kawamorita, 2015).
Viewed from a cultural lens, startup creation processes are affected by diversity. First, different culture identities among the same team will affect the team creativity (Paulus and Nijstad, 2003). Teams composed by individuals who have diverse cultural experiences and deriving from different backgrounds should have a larger range of ideas that can be shared. Those members will be more brilliant individually if they are also multilingual which will improve their participation in the group and lead to unique and innovative ideas (Blot, Zárate and Paulus, 2003). Second, not sharing the same perception will be of a great impact on the decision making. In fact, in case of controversial management, these can even lead to conflicts within the team (Stahl et al., 2010). Third, the information sharing and communication processes will be different. Those channels need to be examined carefully as can inhibit interactions in the very early phases of the team creation and growth (Watson, Kumar and Michaelsen, 1993). Last but not least, cultural diversity affects also the types of tasks and the way of doing those tasks (Leung and Wang, 2015).

3 Case Study

3.1 Method

The exploratory nature of our research prompted us to adopt a qualitative case study to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals, organizations, and entrepreneurial ecosystems respond to the design of an intercultural EEP, thereby analyzing the phenomenon in its complexity and in its actual context (Yin, 2009). This research is based on participatory observation due to the direct participation of coauthors in the program from its inception (Bryman 2016). Although participation in the project is still continuing, the emphasis of this article is on the time period between programme inception and the development of embryonic startup company ideas. Due to lockdown in the involved countries, the coauthors participated in IT online based programme meetings with 42 multicultural and heterogeneous teams, advisors, and organizers of BESTMEDGRAPE, an entrepreneurship education program involving countries that tracks aspiring entrepreneurs throughout the entire startup business creation process design. These reflective techniques and observations contributed to a deeper understanding of the relationship between the EEP's design, international diversity, and entrepreneurial ecosystem players.

Coauthors also had access to drafts and comments on the publication's first EEP design version. In this manner, they carefully monitored the general progression of the project from its inception to its execution, which included the design and implementation of the BESTMEDGRAPPE EEP's milestones and practical concerns. The case study focuses on the BESTMEDGRAPE entrepreneurial education program, which was supported by ENI CBC Med and went into operation in March 2021. It entails diverse Mediterranean nations that monitored the development of startups of aspiring entrepreneurs throughout the whole creative process. This research employs an inductive, field-based case study because the link between EEP design, multicultural diversity, and startup formation process requires more exploration; it is ideally suited to the development of grounded theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Specifically, this method enables the examination of Hofstede (1980)'s dimensions that influence the choice of startup formation process over time.

For the investigation, it served as the only case study. Despite the fact that a single case study limits the generalizability of the results, it provides for a deeper knowledge of the company formation process by integrating interview data (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2012), trace records, archive records,

direct observation, and personal experience. The research is based on the accumulation of evidence. Every insight is used to develop a model. The programme was selected as a setting due to the existence of multicultural diversity and the monitoring of the startup formation process; hence, BESTMEDGRAPE is a "representative or typical scenario" (Yin 2009). The difficulty of the topic and the rarity of entrepreneurship education programs in the era of COVID-19, which includes countries with different cultures and traditions, persuaded us to conduct interviews with all members of the program, including participants, business advisors, technicians, administrators, and consultants. We studied the encounters from the days of networking, but we soon saw the cultural elements that had been added. As a result, we focused on the output of the teams and their conduct during these meetings, supported by the programme's animator's expertise and extra information. In order to assemble our data set, we first extract the model's three principal dimensions: entrepreneurship education program, intercultural diversity, and startup characteristics.

3.2 BESTMEDGRAPE Entrepreneurship Education Programme

BESTMEDGRAPE is an EEP that is funded by the ENI CBC MED cross-border cooperation program. It involves 5 Mediterranean countries (France, Jordan, Italy, Lebanon and Tunisia), 8 partners and 10 technical outputs. It is a programme that encourages for innovation and creativity but constraints the participants to exploit grapes and nanotechnology to bring an innovative business idea. By collaborating with each other, they are asked to obtain pomace to produce high quality cosmeceutical and nutraceutical nanoformulas. Put simply, they were given a single specific topic and a specific aim and were asked to find a solution to that problem. BESTMEDGRAPE EEP ideas are actually based on three main sectors; wine sector, cosmetics, and nutraceuticals. Ecologically and economically speaking, it aims to guarantee circular economy. The idea was to protect the tradition of wine cultivation in the project's countries. From a macro level perspective, BESTMEDGRAPE aims to reduce pollution, boost local economies and reduce unemployment by opening new doors for job seekers. In fact, the participants should not be necessarily experts in these sectors because the objective is to make them seek for partnerships and get advantage of each other skills diversity.

Only physical persons who have reached eighteen years, and are in possession of a secondary school diploma of first degree (middle school certificate) are able to present their candidatures to join the programme. The call was open for the holders of all degrees without restrictions. In March 2021, BESTMEDGRAPE started with 163 nascent entrepreneurs among the 5 countries; including 35 in Tunisia, 30 in Italy, 30 in Jordan, 26 in Lebanon and 15 in France to currently arrive to a total of 86 entrepreneurs. BESTMEDGRAPE EEP was divided in three teaching phases; "Breeding Ground for Business Ideas", "Development of the Business Ideas" and "Contamination UP". During these phases, there were first multidisciplinary teachers to accompany the potential entrepreneurs in the first phase and help them to gain more expertise in several aspects in parallel with the living labs activities to enhance the scientific skills of the participants especially that not all of them are graduates of biology/pharmaceutical schools; the courses are entitled "business creation", "creative processes and methods", "graphics", "entrepreneurship", "marketing" and "strategies and innovation". The project gives importance to the technical, scientific aspects but also to the artistic aspects. Then, in the second stage there were multiple consultancies conducted with each team to clarify their doubts and get personalized skills. These consultancies concern finance, law, mentoring, communication and graphics. Furthermore, all along the process, participants had the opportunity to join several integrative activities that have direct link with the topic of the project and networking meetings to weld relations between the participants from all the 5 corners. In December 2021, the participants joined a ceremony for networking in Jordan where they had the opportunity to know each other in presence, present their ideas while pitching for X minutes each and to receive feedback from a jury committee. The total of presented ideas was 42 innovative prominent business ideas. The third phase is predicted to be based on one to one consultancies with the entrepreneurs to finalize the last operations for the startups. Overall, the programme followed the strategy of "learning by doing". The programme's stuff worked hard to support the participants to prepare decent pitch and to arrive, the networking days in Jordan, ready to

present their ideas and convince the audience and future investors about the importance of their ideas and the added value their startups will bring to the 5 markets.

BESTMEDGRAPE involves many actors all along the process; participants, teachers, consultants, coaches, universities, research centers and venture capitalists. It started with the target that to be conducted just on one edition and to succeed to have ten business ideas presented by all potential entrepreneurs from each country of the project. To surpass the misunderstanding problems and to build a bridge between the different intercultural actors, the programme integrated a new figure role that is so useful in case the programme is intercultural; it is the animator of coworking processes and creation of networks between potential new entrepreneurs. This figure is responsible for maintaining a high speed of socialization among the participants from the 5 corners of the Mediterranean, and incentivizing them to create different synergies (cooperation, partnerships, etc.) between each other. The nations concerned are so diverse in terms of alcohol production and use, as well as in their "comment-faire." In other words, the program's participants are diverse not just in terms of their talents, but also in terms of their languages, faiths, habits, and way of thinking. The French participants were mostly catholic and they were varied in terms of their financial conditions. The majority of participants from Jordan are female. They practice Islam. The age of the participants was also extremely diverse, spanning many age groups. Italians are catholic and bilingual in Italian and English. Additionally, the Italian partner selected volunteers from diverse backgrounds and age groups. Some of them are single, while others are in committed relationships. In addition, participants from Lebanon are religiously heterogeneous, and speak both French and English. They have diverse academic and professional backgrounds. Finally, Tunisians also speak Arabic, French, and English, and are mostly Muslims. The majority of participants are between the ages of eighteen and sixty. In addition, they include people who are single and others who are coupled. After observing the behavior of the participants for one year and two months, we discovered that Jordanian participants tend to be collectivistic, while French participants are more individualistic and prefer to develop companies on their own. It is impossible for a single individual to build a group among Italians due to their team-oriented attitude. Participants of Tunisian and Lebanese descent are rather different; they exhibited distinct tendencies. In the beginning, they were unsure whether or not to join a team, but in the end, the majority of them decided to do so in order to become more powerful by combining their abilities and knowledge. Regarding the femininity/masculinity component, the majority of nations, with the exception of France, had the majority of board members comprised of women/girls. In addition, the major findings indicate that Italian and French participants tend to be risk-averse, while Tunisian, Jordanian, and Lebanese participants are risk-takers. This might be explained by the numerous regulations and constraints governing business activity in Arabic nations. In a similar vein, Tunisians, Lebanese, Jordanians, and Italians were interested in learning more about the possibility of issuing new patents for nanotechnology techniques, continued to inquire about the possibility of forming partnerships with other nations, and participated in networking and social meetings/dinners with a great deal of enthusiasm. They are unquestionably long-term visionaries, while the French participants seem to be businesspeople with short-term vision. Finally, power distance was not seen in the case study since each group consisted only of department heads and co-founders. They have not yet hired personnel to improve this dimension's analysis.

Different nations have varying procedures for launching new businesses. In fact, the participants revealed how their peculiarities affected the features of their companies inside their respective teams. Being a long-term/short-term visionary, risk-averse/risk-taker, feminist/masculinity, individualistic/collectivist, etc. have a significant effect on the company. After observing the behavior of the participants for one year and two months, we discovered that Jordanian participants, who are more collectivistic, prefer to follow lengthier and more complicated processes, while French participants, who are more individualistic, tend to follow shorter procedures. As large teams, Italians have also opted for lengthy procedures. After participants agreed to create teams, Tunisian and Lebanese players underwent procedures that were roughly lengthy. In addition, the program is structured to be implemented in three parts, with several months between each, which aided participants with a propensity for lengthy startup development processes.

The multicultural elements have impacted the dynamics of other startups. Some participants from all of the programme's counties have considered the utility of launching a startup that will be responsible for providing the pomace or other grape derivatives to the startup and enterprises that need it as primary inputs, but not participants from Jordan, and this is due to two factors; first, it can be explained by religion, but BESTMEDGRAPE involves two other countries where the majority of the population is Muslim but wine and alcohol are widely consumed. In reality, the university in Jordan gives the pomace to the participants since it has significant amounts available for experimental reasons, unlike in Italy, France, Tunisia, and Lebanon. Their local laws also pose obstacles. A further finding of interest is the predominance of artistic concepts in France and their near absence in the other project nations, which may be explained by the indulgence of the French participants. Consequently, the level of indulgence of the participants influences their choices towards industries. The operational decisions were restricted by financial considerations in approximately all the startups under BESTMEDGRAPE programme. That is why; they are all in stand-by, waiting for the results of the grants to carry on their plans. As the "infusions of external debt typically follow infusions of external equity" (Berger and Udell, 2005). All the participants are studying the different financial opportunities they have received or willing to ask for. Nevertheless, Tunisians, Lebanese participants and Jordanians are seeking more for partnerships and new opportunities and this is because of their tendency to risk-taking. As for what regards the programme's performance, it is achieving its objectives one by one. As a matter of fact, professors from the programme's committee have succeeded to publish 3 articles. The programme succeeded to encourage the participants to select business ideas that are so innovative, useful for the local territory but also environmentally friendly and helps local community to gain new opportunities in many levels. It is a project highly interesting to agricultural workers, local wineries and also cosmological freelancers. Furthermore, the committee of the programme has issued a public call that was closed some days ago and for this, the results will be shortly announced to grant the primary investments to the participants, who have fulfilled all the criteria, in order to launch their startups.

4 Discussion and conclusion

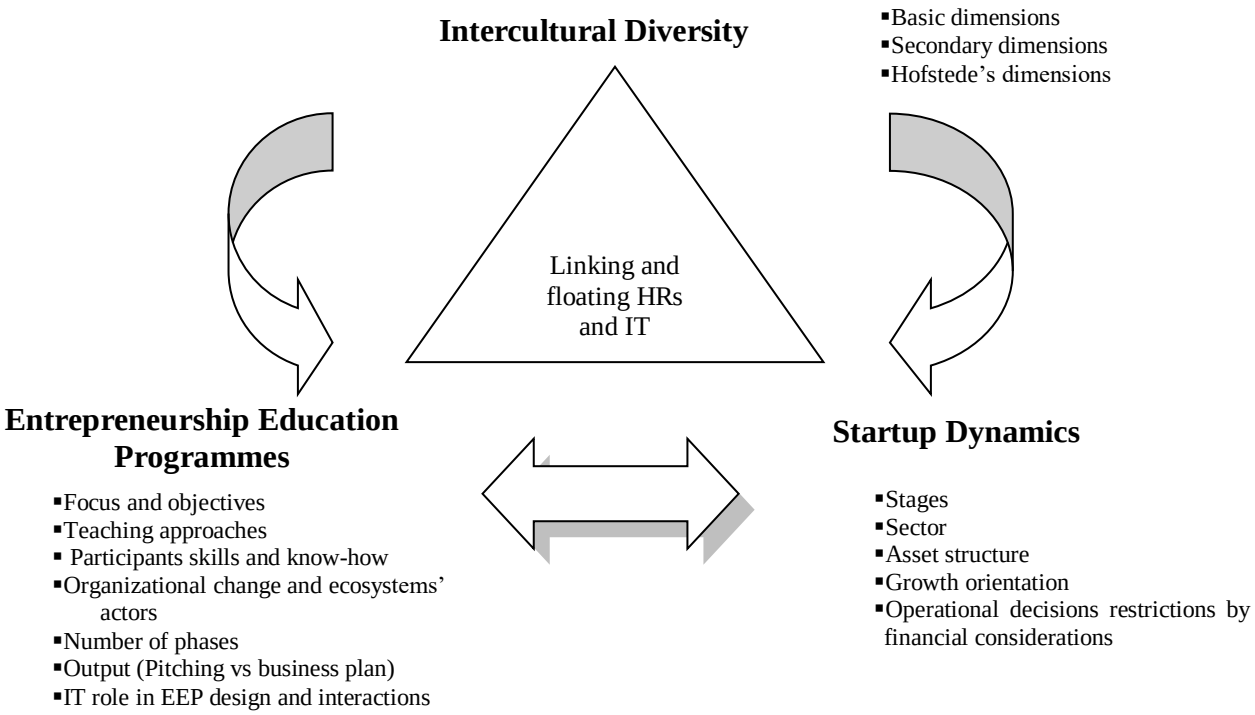

Figure 1. The interplay between Intercultural Diversity, EEP and Startup Dynamics

This research highlights the influence of intercultural diversity on startup dynamics and entrepreneurship education programs using Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions as a model. From this perspective, the interactions between observed cultural variables, startup dynamics, and the architecture of an entrepreneurial education pathway are complex and require a reevaluation of such pathways in light of the contentious characteristics and cross-cultural diversity composition of each programme.
Second, it highlights the reciprocal impact of these traits on the design of EEPs (Salamzadeh and Kesim, 2017) and vice versa. In sum, research examines the relationship between the aforementioned three literatures in order to assist future EEPs designers and academic theorists.
The nature and purpose of EEPs influence the design and characteristics of startups. All of the cultural aspects outlined in the study (primary, secondary, and Hofstede's (2011) dimensions) may play a significant role in guiding startup dynamics (stages, sectors and operational decisions). In addition, the attitudes of prospective entrepreneurs have a significant influence on businesses. For instance, being indulgent or not may define some of the participants' choices for the characteristics of their future businesses, such as the industry, and being risk-averse or not can provide EEP designers with a sense of the financial evaluation and operational activities' speed. In addition, the number of stages of the program may facilitate or complicate the work for participants with a cultural background that tends to be collectivist and favors lengthy, complicated procedures while building their companies. In addition, the case study illustrated how the IT and virtual environment influences team performance (Shachaf, 2008). It demonstrated how the program was able to create peace amongst potential entrepreneurs at times when it seemed hard to do so because to Covid-19.

This research corroborates the significance of having figures inside EEPs to manage transgressions, relationships, and organizational change, particularly in international sectors and during times of stress and conflict. It is vital to develop figures and roles intimately related with diversity management, interaction, and conflict resolution. IT may thus play a crucial role in the design and creation of an entrepreneurial education path. In this respect, the conclusions of this study remind designers that the use of customized technologies and platforms may result in successful configurations for the growth of interaction among organizational players in projects and among actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem as a whole.
Moreover, the process of continuous organizational transformation of the aforementioned actors necessitates the definition of common roles, both from the standpoint of the individual expanding enterprises and in the configuration of the involved players and the resulting business ecosystem as a whole. Consequently, a number of shared work animators and cultural mediators have been permitted to operate and experiment with techniques for fostering involvement and creativity inside future programs.
In addition, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on IS and EEPs design by demonstrating that the use of IT in multicultural entrepreneurship education programs may amplify the role of the businesses that are created. Regarding outputs such as stages, sector, asset structure, growth orientation, operational decision restriction, and financial considerations.
This research is valuable for legislators, aspiring entrepreneurs, and educational program designers who are tasked with addressing the inherent complexity of this topic. As mentioned previously, the framework aims to improve the quality of entrepreneurship education programs by making interaction more efficient through the adoption of innovative IT platforms, reliance on multilingual instructors, and consideration of the role of animators and cultural mediators.

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