Abstract

This study explores the specifics of starting the entrepreneurship and formation of entrepreneurial self-identity among people with different experiences of entrepreneurial activity. Starting the entrepreneurial activity of successful Russian entrepreneurs involves experience of life crisis, which is determined by the existential experiences. There were identified and described two types of life crises: “the crisis of the actual condition” and “the crisis of the development”. Young entrepreneurs do not associate starting business with life crisis and existential experience. The formation of entrepreneurial self-identity of successful entrepreneurs is unstable. The same process is authentic and often deliberately initiated by young entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Starting the Entrepreneurship, Existential Analysis, Life Crisis, Self-Identity.

1. Introduction

In today's global world of continuous change and economic competition the role and value of entrepreneurship are growing. Some studies conclude that almost one-half of the differences in economic growth rates across countries can be explained by differing rates of entrepreneurial activity [1]. But worldwide entrepreneurship is declining [2] and younger people less likely try entrepreneurship [2], [3]. It appears to be a problem to attract young and talented people in this sphere.

In Russia the entrepreneurship as social phenomena is too young; its own history is less than 30 years, that’s why it exacerbates the problem. There are entrepreneurial culture and certain precedents of successful

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-913-119-13-17; fax: +7-382-252-97-10.
E-mail address: smetanova@mail.ru
entrepreneurship [4]. However, a stable system of entrepreneurial development and reproduction still does not exist.

The results of social and psychological research of entrepreneurship [5], [6], [7] demonstrate that entering into this sphere depends on its attraction and social values. Some studies conclude that certain demographic characteristics [8] and personal peculiarities [6], [9], [10], [11] influence the entrepreneurial intention.

However, there have been only a limited number of studies addressing personal values and meanings of entrepreneurial activity and starting the entrepreneurial activity. In addition, there is a lack of such researches in Russia.

2. Method and Procedure

This study attempted to describe the specifics of starting the entrepreneurship and entering into this sphere among people with different experiences of entrepreneurial activity.

The methodological foundation of the study is the system-anthropological psychology approach. The research methods used are existential analysis and transtemporal analysis described by Lukyanov [12]. Research data has been obtained by qualitative research interview [13].

There were 155 entrepreneurs with different experiences of entrepreneurial activity who took part in the study: 55 successful entrepreneurs of Tomsk city and 100 young ones. The group of successful entrepreneurs includes businessmen with experiences of entrepreneurial activity ranging 10 to 23 years. One-third of the group has more than 15-years experiences of entrepreneurial activity. Almost 20% of the group is market leaders, who started their business in Soviet Union. The group of young entrepreneurs includes the participants of entrepreneurial competition “BIT Siberia” with small or absent experiences of entrepreneurial activity. The groups do not differ in gender, education and line of business.

3. Results

The results of the research demonstrate that starting the entrepreneurial activity of successful entrepreneurs involves experience of life crisis, which determined by the existential experiences: responsibility, meaning and freedom. This life crisis used to be resulting of unbalanced between personal purpose and motives and environmental conditions.

As a result we can identify two types of life crises that determine start of entrepreneurial activity and the entering into entrepreneurship of successful entrepreneurs. They are “the crisis of the actual condition” and “the crisis of the development”.

The “crisis of the actual condition” is subjectively more negative. It hinders effective self-regulation of life activity and creates the sense of impossibility being in actual reality. Respondents describe this crisis through the sense of responsibility to their family, their children and parents, who need their support. By the way often responsibility helped our respondents to struggle and let them achieve their purposes. For example, one respondent reported his success to be the result of responsibility for family.

The crisis of development is described as an experience of growth lack or growth restriction, lack of perspectives, frustration of development and self-realization [14].

These crises include the experience loss of meaning and the search for life meaningfulness. Sometimes they combine with “crises of the actual condition”, but often described separately and experienced apart from them. This type of crisis makes entrepreneurship the possibility for use.

The starting entrepreneurship of young participants of business competition is not associated with life crisis and existential experience. The entrepreneurship is perceived by them like an element of natural process of life development or fortuity and sometimes it was viewed as the life experiment. They are “trying to become the entrepreneurs” but “ready to work for hire in case of fail”. However, the long-term analysis demonstrates that
their business results depend on experience of struggling and overcoming crises. The most successful in entrepreneurship are those young people who found own personal values and meanings of entrepreneurial activity through this experience. The crises of personal change which are usually inward and accompany each development prevail here. They determine the decision about starting business less and often are not included in process of entering into entrepreneurship.

The results of the research discovered certain peculiarities of formation of entrepreneurial self-identity in different respondent groups.

The formation of entrepreneurial self-identity of successful entrepreneurs is very difficult and unstable. Our respondents differentiate their business start with the moment of formation of entrepreneurial self-identity which perceived like a special self-attitude. Usually this experience is not fixed on life-line, dynamic and “moves” along life-line in the process of self-reflection. Probably, it can be explained by the Russian social situation of 90th and doubtful attitudes and values of entrepreneurship in that period.

In the other respondent group the entrepreneurship is perceived as the scope of self-realization, which allows them to realize higher values and the value of personal autonomy and freedom. The process of formation of their entrepreneurial self-identity is authentic, it is often deliberately initiated. They perceive entrepreneurship itself as a natural process of self-fulfillment.

The results of this research help us to develop coaching programs and can be used in practice.

References