ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS AMONG STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION – BITOLA

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is an individual's ability to turn ideas into action (EP & Council, 2006). It is a dynamic process that creates value, increases wealth, and improves well-being. Entrepreneurship is important for a number of reasons, from promoting social change to driving innovation. Great entrepreneurs have the ability to change the way we live and work, both locally and nationally. Because of all these benefits, the development of entrepreneurial skills in individuals is a priority on the national agendas of many countries around the world. Entrepreneurship education is one of the most important aspects of curricula globally, while in Macedonia, it appears in the national curriculum either as a cross-curricular topic or as a separate subject taught in higher education.

However, what still remains unclear is the interest of young people in entrepreneurship—how they understand it, as well as their motivation and readiness to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This paper explores the attitudes and opinions of students from the Faculty of Education in Bitola regarding entrepreneurship and their entrepreneurial intentions. It also takes into account certain factors related to the characteristics of entrepreneurs, along with external factors linked to the environment in which they operate.

Key words: entrepreneurship, students, attitudes

Introduction

Entrepreneurship as a competency is defined as the ability of an individual to act on opportunities and ideas to create value for others. This value can be social, cultural, or financial. According to the European Commission, "entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and taking calculated risk, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives..." (EP & Council, 2006: p. 394/17). This understanding of entrepreneurship indicates that it is a key competence that focuses on two aspects. The first relates to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action, after developing entrepreneurial attitudes, skills, and knowledge. The second emphasizes that entrepreneurship is not only related to economic activities and business creation, but more broadly to all areas of life and society. This means that entrepreneurship is a life competence. Being creative or thinking about how to do things in new ways is equally important for advancing a personal career (one's own career) or for coming up with new business ideas. Taking initiative, mobilizing resources and people, and involving them in your own idea are useful skills, regardless of whether it's for fundraising for a local sports team or founding a new enterprise. Understanding how to turn plans into action and wisely use resources is important for an individual's personal life, as well as for planning a business in a small or medium-sized company.

The education of entrepreneurship is considered the most effective method to stimulate entrepreneurship within a society (Aaltio & Eskelinen, 2016). Entrepreneurship within education appears in different contexts. At the primary education level, most of the European countries include entrepreneurial education in the curriculum as a cross-curricular objective while at the upper secondary education level, it is included in the curriculum either as an optional separate subject or integrated in other subjects (e.g., social sciences, economics, and business studies). In the Republic of North Macedonia, entrepreneurial education, similar to European countries, is integrated as an inter-curricular competence in the lower levels of education. At this level, the entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and initiative are encouraged through various teaching contents and activities within the existing subjects. In the higher levels of education, especially in secondary and higher education, entrepreneurship is studied as a separate subject, which allows for a deeper understanding of concepts related to creating and managing a business, innovations, and market thinking.

Although entrepreneurship has already been introduced into the educational system as part of the efforts to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit among young people, what remains unclear is what their attitudes are

towards undertaking entrepreneurial ventures. The question arises whether young people are truly interested in and ready to start their own business, or if they see entrepreneurship as a distant and risky option. What are their perceptions of entrepreneurs—do they see them as inspirational models or as profit-oriented individuals focused only on personal gain? What are their perceptions of the external factors for starting their own business? Therefore, this paper aims to examine students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship and undertaking entrepreneurial ventures.

1. Attitude and entrepreneurial attitude

Attitude represents the tendency for an individual to show a positive or negative personal assessment. Attitude is a "complex mental state related to beliefs, feelings, values, and dispositions to act in certain ways" (Sushila, 2019). An attitude can be defined as a set of feelings, beliefs, and intentions toward certain objects, people, or institutions.

An entrepreneurial attitude refers to the degree to which an individual has a positive or negative capacity to become an entrepreneur, predicting the likelihood that the individual will become an entrepreneur in the future. The entrepreneurial attitude is a choice of students to become self-employed rather than employed by an organization. Hence, a high inclination toward entrepreneurship would mean that most of the respondents would rather be their own bosses than employees in an organization.

2. Review of literature

The educational system plays a large role in the upbringing and development of young people's attitudes toward life and in raising entrepreneurial individuals. It should develop and promote entrepreneurial initiatives among students and graduates. The positive role of universities in developing entrepreneurial intent and discovering the factors that influence entrepreneurial behavior has been confirmed by a large number of studies (Autio et al., 1997; Duijn, 2005; Fayolle et al., 2005; Gibb, 1994; Hannan et al., 2004; Hannon, 2005; Lüthje & Franke, 2003; Reitan, 1997, as cited in Venesaar, Kolbre, & Piliste, 2006), which also suggest that stimulating entrepreneurial education can influence students' attitudes and intentions toward entrepreneurship.

According to Shaikh, (Shaikh, 2012 as cited in Sukumar, Gayathri & Preetha, 2022), students' education influences their intention to become entrepreneurs. According to the results of his research, age, autonomy, independence, self-efficacy, and personal ownership have a significant impact on the desire to start a business. What is interesting in his findings is that with the increase in the level of education, the likelihood of undertaking an entrepreneurial venture decreases. These results are likely due to the individual's expectations that with a higher level of education, their chances for a better job position in a company may increase and improve.

Many studies indicate that certain personality traits are essential prerequisites for engaging in entrepreneurship (McClelland 1961, Hisrich and Peters 1989 as cited in Venesaar, Kolbre, & Piliste, 2006). As early as the 18th century, Cantillon defined the entrepreneur as a decision-maker driven by motivation and a bearer of risk, in order to manage business ventures. Schumpeter defined the entrepreneur as an innovator, while for Shapero (Shapero 1975 as cited in Sukumar et al. 2022), the entrepreneurial personality is someone with initiative, an organizer, and a risk-bearer. Many authors agree that entrepreneurs typically possess boldness to take risks, optimism about success (e.g., Richards, 1999 as cited in Venesaar, Kolbre, & Piliste, 2006), sufficient self-confidence to begin implementing their ideas, and a strong ambition for independence (see, e.g., Hisrich & Peters, 1989 as cited in Venesaar, Kolbre, & Piliste, 2006). The enterprising spirit—including qualities such as dedication and commitment—has also been emphasized as essential by Timmons (1994 as cited in Venesaar, Kolbre, & Piliste, 2006). These individual-level traits are considered crucial in explaining who is likely to recognize and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities.

However, relying solely on personality traits places a certain limitation in explaining entrepreneurial initiative and ventures, because although certain traits may encourage entrepreneurial behavior, other factors (such as attitudes, intentions), as well as a suitable environment and conditions for implementation, are also important for stimulating entrepreneurial activity. In short, the combination of circumstances, along with knowledge about entrepreneurship, largely determines who will start a business.

Certain studies emphasize the need for an entrepreneurial attitude and intention as factors that determine entrepreneurial behavior (Ajzen 1991, Fayolle & Gailly 2005 as cited in Venesaar, Kolbre, & Piliste, 2006). However, such factors can be significantly influenced by entrepreneurial education (Fayolle et al. 2005, Hannan et al. 2004, Hannon 2005, Lüthje & Franke 2003, 2004 as cited in Venesaar, Kolbre, & Piliste, 2006). Therefore, through the active introduction of entrepreneurship at the university level, it is possible to significantly influence students' attitudes, inspiring and encouraging them to start their own entrepreneurial ventures.

Hence, by actively promoting entrepreneurship at the university level, students are significantly more inspired and empowered to pursue their own business ventures.

3. Empirical research

In addition to the theoretical overview, the paper aims to obtain data through an empirical approach, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of young people's inclination toward entrepreneurship. The goal of the conducted research is to uncover students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship and their opinions on the social and environmental foundations for undertaking entrepreneurial ventures.

This paper seeks to highlight some current issues that could be further useful for research and for taking steps in the area of encouraging entrepreneurship among students through:

- Identifying students' entrepreneurial attitudes and their intention to start their own business;
- Exploring students' perspectives on the social and environmental factors that influence and support entrepreneurial initiatives.
- Exploring the relationship between educational factors and students' entrepreneurial intentions.

4. Methodology and Research Results

The research was conducted among 85 students at the Faculty of Education – Bitola, during the period from February to May 2025. The age range of the students was between 19 and 28 years, with 86% (73) being female students and 14% (12) male students. All participants were undergraduate students from various first-cycle study programs.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically via Google Forms. The questions included multiple-choice answers or ratings using a Likert scale. The acquisition of entrepreneurial education was measured using a dichotomous scale (1 = Yes and 2 = No), with an open-ended option to specify the type of educational activity the respondent had participated in. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

Table 1 presents the structure of the respondents according to the observed sociodemographic characteristics.

Gender Gender	 Number of students
Male	12
Female	73
Age Age	 Number of students
Up to 19 years	26
20 to 22 years old	38
23 to 27 years old	15
Over 28 years old	6
Study program Study program	 Number of students
Elementary school teacher	21
Pre-school teacher	18
Macedonian Language and Literature Teaching	7
Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature	27
Pedagogy in social and rehabilitation work	12

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Based on the aim of the paper, the research analyzed the attitudes and opinions of students regarding entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs among students at the Faculty of Education – Bitola. The results show that the largest portion of students, 29%, believe that entrepreneurs "create new products and services for the good of all," while 25% think that entrepreneurs create jobs. However, 16% of respondents believe that entrepreneurs "exploit the labor of others" or "thinks only about their own profit" (13%), which overall indicates that a significant percentage of students still hold a negative perception of entrepreneurs (Table 2). It is important how the figure of the entrepreneur is shaped in society, as this ultimately influences the attitudes and ambitions of young people toward starting an entrepreneurial venture.

Attitudes	Number of students	Percent
He/She is capable of starting their own business.	14	16%
Creates jobs	21	25%
Creates new products and services for the benefit of all	25	29%
Exploits the labor of others	14	16%
Thinks only about their own profit.	11	13%

Table 2: Attitudes of Students About the Entrepreneur's Status

The decision to start a new business is a product of individual attitudes and perceptions, shaped within a social, cultural, and political context that can either support or hinder that decision. Some environments readily embrace entrepreneurial exchange and trade, while others view new businesses as a characteristic of transitional economies. Regardless of the cultural context, in order to be successful, an entrepreneur must rely on a wide range of stakeholders, such as investors, employees, suppliers, and customers, as well as the unspoken support of family and friends.

Since entrepreneurship is a social and cultural phenomenon, the respondents were asked whether they know someone who has recently started a business, whether there are good opportunities to start a business, and how easy it is to start a business in their own country. 77% of students answered that they know someone who has started a business in the past two years, while 23% do not. Knowing someone who has started their own business can raise awareness about entrepreneurship and increase understanding of the related advantages and disadvantages. Being familiar with other entrepreneurs means exposure to role models and mentors, which can be motivating and provide valuable connections and advice.

Considering whether it is easy to start a business can show how young people perceive the environment—as either enabling or limiting for entrepreneurial activity. The majority of young people (44% agree and 14% completely agree) believe that it is easy to start a business in their own country, which suggests a favorable environment for entrepreneurship (Table 3).

It's easy to start your own business in my country	Number of students	Percentage
I completely agree	12	14%
I agree	37	44%
I don't know	9	11%
I don't know agree	13	15%
I completely don't agree	14	16%

Table 3: Students' Perception of the Ease of Starting a Business in Their Own Country

There appears to be a potential relationship between the perceived ease of starting a business and perceptions of opportunities. In response to the question *How often do you see opportunities in your environment to create your own business?*, most respondents (36%) answered often, while 20% answered very often (Table 4). The perception of favorable opportunities for creating a business further suggests the ability to recognize such opportunities.

How often do you see opportunities to start your own business in your surroundings	Number of students	Percentage
Very rarely	9	11%
Rarely	11	13%
I don't know	17	20%
Often	31	36%
Very often	17	20%

Table 4: Students' Perceptions of Opportunities to Create Their Own Business

However, although students often perceive opportunities to start a business, half of the respondents would not take actions to start a business. Specifically, 31% answered that they do not know how they would act if they noticed a profitable opportunity to start a business, 21% would not take any action, while 48% of students would take actions to start a new business. (Table 5).

If I notice a profitable opportunity to start a business	Number of students	Percentage
I will take actions to start my own business	41	48%
I don't know	26	31%
I will not take any actions to start my own business	18	21

Table 5: Students' Intended Actions When Noticing Profitable Business Opportunities

An important determinant of whether to start a business or not is whether individuals see themselves as potential entrepreneurs. To assess this, respondents were asked whether they possess knowledge of business management and whether they view entrepreneurship as a potential career opportunity (Table 6). Half of the respondents believe that they possess the knowledge to manage their own business.

I have the knowledge and skills to run my own business:	Number of students	Percentage
Strongly agree	16	19%
I agree	29	34%
I don't know	12	14%
I don't agree	18	21%
Totally don't agree	10	12%

Table 6: Students' Perceptions of Their Business Knowledge and Entrepreneurial Potential

Although students perceive good opportunities to start a business and possess knowledge of business management, only a very small percentage would choose entrepreneurship as a career option (Table 7). Only 5% of respondents completely agree, and 12% agree that they view entrepreneurship as a potential career opportunity. Fear of failure or other factors should be further examined to determine what may act as a constraint for young people in deciding to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors.

Entrepreneurship as a Career	Number of students	Percent
Strongly agree	5	5%
Agree	11	12%
Neutral / Don't know	39	41%
Disagree	28	29%
Strongly disagree	12	13%

Table 7: Students' Career Orientation Towards Entrepreneurship

The reasons for starting a business can be numerous. Indeed, there may be as many reasons to start a business as there are people who want to start one. These reasons include the desire to make a positive difference in the environment, the pursuit of higher income, the wish for independence and autonomy, continuing the family business, or simply having no other employment options. These reasons are important because they reflect the socio-economic conditions in which individuals operate—for example, when employment opportunities are perceived as scarce. 46% of respondents indicated that they would become entrepreneurs "to earn a large profit and accumulate significant wealth," suggesting that young people are attracted to the idea of earning and building something substantial, at least something larger than what they could achieve as salaried employees. 26% would choose to become entrepreneurs to make a positive difference, and 20% to continue the family tradition (Table 8).

If I decide to become an entrepreneur, it will be to..	Number of students	Percent
make a positive difference in the community.	22	26%
earn a large profit and build great wealth.	39	46%
continue the family tradition.	17	20%
make a living because it's hard to find a job.	7	8%

Table 8: Students' Reasons for Choosing Entrepreneurship

The results of the research also show that entrepreneurial education is a weak component in our educational institutions. When asked whether they had participated in a program or activity related to entrepreneurship during high school, only 31% answered yes, while 69% stated that they had not taken part in such an activity. The activities they mentioned included high school internships, summer jobs, or occasional help in the family business.

The study also shows that 49% of students believe that entrepreneurship should be included in the curriculum and programs of universities, indicating a clear interest among students in entrepreneurial education and their awareness of its significant role (Table 9).

Entrepreneurship in a university program	Number of students	Percent
Fully agree	29	34%
Agree	13	15%
Not sure	22	26%
Disagree	13	15%
Strongly disagree	8	9%

Conclusion

The research on students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship shows that many students view entrepreneurs as people who create new products and services for the benefit of all, or as those who generate employment opportunities. This indicates that among young people, entrepreneurs have a positive image and social value, which is important for fostering entrepreneurial awareness and culture. The analysis and interpretation show that students observe positive examples of entrepreneurs and business opportunities in their environment. Although they believe they possess the knowledge and skills to manage a business, most students do not see entrepreneurship as a potential career path. This opens the door for further research into the factors that discourage young people from starting their own business. The results also suggest a need for greater representation of entrepreneurial education or entrepreneurship-related activities at universities, as potential future entrepreneurs are found within the student population, regardless of their field of study.

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