
Editorial: Student entrepreneurship, between genius and recklessness: how to connect scientific knowledge, creativity and innovation management

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Research on student entrepreneurship is clearly burgeoning, yet, it remains a fragmented field. Currently, no literature review exists that specifically focuses on university students' entrepreneurship and provides an overarching framework to encompass the different pieces that make it up student entrepreneurship.

It is noteworthy that the research stream on student entrepreneurship views entrepreneurial activity as a step in the natural evolution of a university system that emphasises economic development in addition to the more traditional mandates of education and research. This special issue aimed at revealing the importance of factors that affect significant societal influences from academia to society, and vice versa, as the high interdependence with the government and industry firms, the different sources of income, the entrepreneurial activities of all community members (students, academic and faculty), the implementation of different strategies to improve the creation of new venture and the adjustments in its organisational structure (Del Giudice et al., 2014). Most of the articles in this research stream attempt to reveal organisational designs of universities that inhibit or enhance the commercialisation of university inventions. Studies have revolved around incentive systems, university status, location, culture, intermediary agents, focus, experience, and defined role and identity. In addition to organisational design, other studies focus on the characteristics and roles of faculty and the nature of the technology to be commercialised (Nicotra et al., 2014). Thus, some studies express, implicitly or explicitly, the phenomena of intrapreneurship or process that goes on inside an existing firm, in this case institution, and leads not only to new business ventures but also to other innovative activities and orientation such as development of new products, services, technologies, administrative techniques, strategies and competitive postures (Del Giudice and Straub, 2011). The structural shifts in the entrepreneurial orientation of university pave the way for the ability to innovate, recognise and create opportunities, work in teams, take risks and respond to challenges, on its own, seek to work out a substantial guidance in organisational character so as to arrive at a more promising posture for the future. In other words, it is a natural incubator that provides support structures for students to initiate new ventures: intellectual, commercial and conjoint.

In this volume, we wished to explore the dimensions of the creative process in contrast to problem solving or mere intelligence. Universities that want to encourage creative thought might need to embrace the visions of students and the diversity in personality, style and ideas. The focus of the selected papers occurred on a university

infrastructure that evolves in stressing the particular ability to add value by organising creative knowledge: studies dealing with research based and student entrepreneurship, thus considering the market power of innovative firms created by very young entrepreneurs, have been greatly appreciated. The study of new firm creation based on university inventions can be leveraged to address one of the most important and vexing questions in knowledge management today: by addressing key disciplinary questions in the context of student entrepreneurial activity, we wish to work on a variety of ways to suggest implications for the study of knowledge creation and transfer. Empirical research using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods has been encouraged. We considered conceptual papers that draw on the existing literature and develop innovative contributions that improve our understanding of the topic as well. Several research topics stemmed out from the quality articles selected and we may hardly summarise them: where do entrepreneurial mentalities come from? Why do students resist new ideas even when they are good ones? How can young people (such as students) break the rules of the market by defeating more traditional competitors with innovative ideas and new IT-based marketing tools? How are brain circulation and social networking helping young people disseminate their ideas worldwide?

The selected papers include contributions from Italy, France, the UK and Australia and discuss empirical findings across multiple levels of analysis in a wide range of sectors. Several rounds of blind peer review resulted in the final form of this special issue on February 2014 for publication here. Readers of this special issue should be open-minded enough to consider young students as one of the most powerful entrepreneurial engines worldwide.

The first paper in this special issue, titled 'Team conflict contributing to entrepreneurial learning: understanding conflict as positive within an effectual problem space' has been written by Christina Lea Butler and Karen Williams-Middleton. The impact of team conflict seems to depend upon context. Entrepreneurship literature suggests that learning from diverse perspectives in teams can contribute to entrepreneurial action (Harper, 2008). Recent research streams suggest that entrepreneurial learning might be better understood by applying an effectual logic perspective, instead of causal logic (Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011). Moreover, the authors wonder whether conflict is experienced similarly in entrepreneurial versus managerial teams. Through exploring relationships between team work, conflict in teams and effectuation, the authors propose that positive learning outcomes can emerge from experience of team conflict within an effectual and uncertain problem space.

The second paper, entitled 'Linking intuition and entrepreneurial intention: a comparative study among French and US student entrepreneurs', by Sylvaine Castellano, Adnane Maalaoui, Imen Safraou and Emmanuel Reymond tested whether there is a link between cognitive style and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students. The authors first tested a model of entrepreneurial intention, based on the theory of planned behaviour, explaining how selected sets of students beliefs influence their attitude (personal attractiveness) towards entrepreneurship and perceived behavioural control (feasibility), and then how attitude and perceived behavioural control influence intention to start a new venture. Linear regressions were conducted on data from 614 undergraduate students from France and the USA. The main conclusions show that students with a preference for intuition had a more positive attitude toward entrepreneurship and higher entrepreneurial intention. Those with a preference for deliberation had higher perceived behavioural control.

The third article regards a very hot research topic within the studies on student entrepreneurship: the relationship between creativity and success inside student firms. The paper is titled ‘Student entrepreneurship, creativity and success. How much does knowledge heterogeneity really matter?’ and was written by Manlio Del Giudice, Maria Rosaria Della Peruta and Veronica Scuotto. The study points to the substantial creativity and innovation benefits available through a network that specifically hones in on knowledge heterogeneity. Authors’ concern for both knowledge and networks led them to introduce a unique way of using network methods in order to study the knowledge diversity of interpersonal networks. The research study should be of considerable practical concern for students aiming at starting an entrepreneurial pathway.

The fourth paper selected for this volume is entitled ‘Exploring gender issues in entrepreneurship: what about students and recent graduates?’, by Maria Rosaria Della Peruta, Marina Maggioni and Francesco Schiavone. The research aimed at exploring the literature on the barriers to practical entrepreneurship, in order to exemplify the factors that encourage and discourage a business start up and to establish to what extent there is a level playing field in entrepreneurship. The authors’ purpose was to identify the exact needs and requirements of young women in pursuing entrepreneurship as a career option. Their research gathered data from 56 female entrepreneurs engaged in the information technology business in Italy. The findings led the authors to theorise that the close connection between informal social networks and female entrepreneurship may represent a fundamental element to get straighten female entrepreneurship attitude.

The last article, titled ‘The alchemy of student entrepreneurs: towards a model of entrepreneurial maturity’ presents a very practical approach and was authored by Julien Marchand and Suresh Sood. The paper establishes a seven-step theory of entrepreneurship centred on student entrepreneurs. According to the authors’ view, student entrepreneurs are not individuals merely attending entrepreneurial classes but conduct either a business on/near campus or lead a campus enterprise by simultaneously attending formal university award courses. Their theory builds on in-depth interviews with students and entrepreneurs focusing on lived experiences as entrepreneurs; data gathered derive indicators and cues from case studies of archetypal entrepreneurs and foster elicitation of the cognitive skills and the unconscious drives of student entrepreneurs. The research findings guide practical and useful implications for educators and managers.

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