

Specialized entrepreneurship education: does it really matter? Fresh evidence from Pakistan

Specialized
entrepreneurship
education

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Abstract

Purpose – There is a long-standing debate on whether the entrepreneurship education program (EEP) of university graduates can promote entrepreneurship intention and behaviour. The purpose of this paper is to use the theory of planned behaviour as a conceptual framework and compare the differences in entrepreneurial attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and intentions among students who participated in entrepreneurship education with a control group of Master of Business Administration (MBA) students in Pakistan. The study further examines what drives intentions between the two groups.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected using a questionnaire survey from 348 entrepreneurship students and 329 MBAs in their final year (both groups did a total of four years' tertiary study). One-way analysis of variance test and regression analysis were used to examine the differences and the antecedents of entrepreneurship intention between the two groups.

Findings – MBAs have higher entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) than EEP students and the EIs are statistically significant. Nevertheless, the authors did not find any differences in attitude, perceived control behaviour and subjective norms towards entrepreneurship in both the groups. The entrepreneurship intentions of the MBA students are more influenced by social pressure as opposed to EEP students who are influenced by perceived control behaviours.

Research limitations/implications – First, although the study introduced a control group, comparisons were based only on EIs and their antecedents in participants' final year of study. This cross-sectional design provides no information about how much intentions and antecedents changed over time. A longitudinal study would provide information about such changes. Second, the groups in the study were matched in terms of gender, age distribution, family background, years of study and presumed disposition towards running their business. It would be useful if future comparative and longitudinal research measured these individual factors and their effects.

Practical implications – Educational activities render the starting of a business desirable and feasible by changing the attitudes and intentions. Nevertheless, various exposures to the challenges of being an entrepreneur via the education programmes may lower their intention to be entrepreneurs. As such, entrepreneurial programmes should be designed with care.

Social implications – The study provides some insights on improving EIs especially in understanding the antecedents that are important for nations, such as Pakistan which has high unemployment and widespread poverty.

Originality/value – This study provides fresh evidence on the role of entrepreneurship education by comparing EIs and the cognitive antecedents of intentions of the two groups – entrepreneurship as well as MBA students.

Keywords Entrepreneurship education, Theory of planned behaviour, Entrepreneurial intentions

Paper type Research paper



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