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Demographic differences in learner response to entrepreneurial education programmes in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Recent research on the benefits of entrepreneurship education has tended to ignore or “control out” possible demographic differences in outcomes for entrepreneurship graduates. This paper examines demographic differences in the perceived benefits of different components of entrepreneurship education programmes (EEPs), entrepreneurial cognitions and entrepreneurial intentions of EEP graduates. Data were collected by questionnaire from 348 university EEP graduates in Pakistan. All graduates had strong positive attitudes to becoming entrepreneurs and no demographic differences in entrepreneurial intentions were observed. Nonetheless, females in particular, and graduates with no work experience to a lesser extent, exited the EEPs with lower perceived benefits, particularly in terms of inspiration, and slightly weaker perceived control for entrepreneurship, than males and graduates with some experience. No substantial differences were associated with age or entrepreneurial family background. The authors suggest ways in which EEPs can be more inclusive of female students.

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KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurship education programmes; programme structure; learner background; perceived barriers; entrepreneurial intentions

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is considered a vital source of economic prosperity, potentially the most important mechanism in wealth production, job creation, innovation and socio-economic development (Meyer and Allen 1994, 46). Thus, the process of economic development depends on entrepreneurs and the successful creation of new business ventures or start-ups (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). Globalisation and global pressures, such as the reduction of trade barriers and the increased diffusion of advanced telecommunications and technology, provide more opportunities for entrepreneurship, but also more risk and uncertainty. In response, policy-makers have devised various mechanisms to promote entrepreneurship. Aware that top-down promotion is not enough to achieve the desired level of entrepreneurship in society, universities have also been encouraged to find effective ways to stimulate