The quality of the entrepreneurial attitudes among the students of the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdańsk. The pilot study

Introduction

The aim of the research conducted in the form of the pilot study and with the use of a questionnaire method is to identify the students’ attitudes toward entrepreneurship and their future plans connected with it. The results of the study are presented herein to assess the preparation of the students from the Faculty of Management (different courses) at the University of Gdańsk to start their future work life as entrepreneurs. The results are the basis for the conclusions about the quality of the entrepreneurial attitudes among the students of the Faculty of Management and about the role of the Faculty of Management in popularizing entrepreneurial initiatives among students. They can be used as the starting point for wider research in the field, including the research into the representative population of the students from this particular faculty as well as other faculties of management.

1. Entrepreneurship and its essence

Defining entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship has occupied scholars for many years and, indeed, until today, there is the lack of consensus on the exact meaning. Theories that are dealing with entrepreneurship come mainly from three different disciplines: psychology, sociology, and economics. Psychologists interested in identifying the personal characteristics of entrepreneurs. Sociologists have been looking into behavioral as-
pects of the entrepreneurial personality. Economists look at the effect of entrepreneurship on economic development, or, in other words, on application of growth theories within the entrepreneurial context.

J. Schumpeter defined entrepreneurs as innovators who implement entrepreneurial change onto markets. It is believed that an entrepreneurial change has five manifestations: 1) the introduction of a new (or improved) good; 2) the introduction of the new method of production; 3) the opening of a new market; 4) the exploitation of the new source of supply; and 5) the re-engineering/organization of business management processes. Schumpeter’s definition, therefore, equates entrepreneurship with innovation in the business sense, i.e. it focuses on identifying market opportunities and using innovative approaches to exploit them. In OECD Economic Survey from 1997, it was defined as “the dynamic process of identifying economic opportunities and acting upon them by developing, producing and selling goods or services” [Ahmad, Seymour, 2012, pp. 33–42]. Generally speaking, entrepreneurs are those people (business owners) who seek to generate value through the creation or expansion of economic activity, which is linked to the identification and exploitation of new products, processes or markets. Entrepreneurial activity is the enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value through the creation or expansion of economic activity, which is based on the identification and exploitation of new products, processes or markets [Ahmad, Seymour, 2012, pp. 33–42]. Entrepreneurs are viewed as the drivers of economic development. They change the current economic setup and create a new order. They are regarded as individuals who carry out new combinations that come in different forms, such as new goods or new quality products, the new methods of production, new markets, the new sources of supply or the new ways of organization. It is a process by which individuals pursue opportunities without considering resources they currently possess [Nybakk, Hansen, 2008, pp. 473–479]. Moreover, Y. S. Korr et al. [2007, pp. 1191–1196] state that entrepreneurs do not act in response to changes and economic environment, but they stimulate demand through innovation, which involves the creation of new products and services, advertising as well as personal charisma.

One can say that the entrepreneurs create the environment of the entrepreneurship, which, according to P. Pretheeba [2014, pp. 25–36], is an attitude that manifests an individual’s inspiration and ability to discover an opportunity and proceed with it in order to fabricate the new
value or economic development. The same assumptions can be found in the papers by other scholars [Grilo, Thurik, 2005, pp. 143–168; Hwang, Powell, 2005, pp. 201–232; van Stel et al., 2005, pp. 311–321; Bowen, De Clercq, 2008, pp. 747–767], who prove that entrepreneurship is the engine as well as the power of economic growth and it is related to the combination of such determinants as business climate and legal or political conditions.

The literature distinguishes between necessity-driven entrepreneurship and opportunity-driven entrepreneurship [Kelley, Singer, Herrington, 2012, pp. 13–15] or the similar, entrepreneurship “of need” and entrepreneurship “of opportunity” [Hassid, Komselis, 2007, p. 46]. Behind the last is the force that pushes the entrepreneur to undertake risk because of financial reasons or might also stem from a need to achieve something like fulfill one’s dreams, ambitions, or to be successful. As for entrepreneurship “of need” which is more common in transition and developing countries, entrepreneurial activities result from a variety of reasons, for instance, employment discrimination, that make an individual become self-employed. Self-employment is the only choice that remains for the individual to reverse the financial situation under which he or she suffers.

Entrepreneurship education, which seems to be the crucial element of the business schools’/universities’ syllabi and constitutes the integral part of a multidisciplinary education process, seems also very important.

Therefore, for a society that is looking to be entrepreneurial and to experience economic growth through entrepreneurial activity, it is important to cultivate people’s entrepreneurial culture or propensity. The background is created by entrepreneurship oriented education. The literature shows that entrepreneurship education can have an impact on students’ awareness and perceptions in terms of the entrepreneurial attitudes [Kuratko, 2005, pp. 577–597; Pittaway, Cope, 2007, pp. 479–510]. In parallel, it is assumed that the better understanding of students’ attitudes and intentions can be used to develop more effective entrepreneurship education programs [Gibson et al., pp. 11–18]. One can add that the positive role of universities in the development of students’ entrepreneurial intentions and behavior has been analyzed and confirmed by several studies [Octicio, 2012, p. 2].
2. The quality of the entrepreneurial attitudes

The literature shows that the attitude is a very complex and unique concept, which integrates multiple properties and covers different domains [Zhang, Campbell, 2010, pp. 595–612; Kususanto et al., 2012, pp. 87–98]. There is a tendency to believe in a certain way or to experience particular feelings in certain situations. It drives the impulse to take an action aimed at achieving the goal. It also defines the personality of the people by means of the quality of their performance and outputs [Laguador, 2013, pp. 28–33]. Common findings in the research on attitudes and beliefs show that attitudes, beliefs and the ways of behavior are linked. Attitudes find their roots in beliefs and they influence behavior [Siragusa, Dixon, 2009]. Students’ attitudes can be observed through their behavior inside and outside the classroom, inside and outside the faculty building, during practices and internships in different companies or while implementing different projects. It can be assessed by observing the management during different processes, in which they act as the team and/or as project leaders. If their attitudes translate into entrepreneurial behavior and if that behavior translates into positive entrepreneurship results for the particular student, it can be assumed that they are of high quality. The abovementioned idea may be proved by the results of the studies presented in the literature. They show that positive attitudes toward entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial activity and its social function are determinant factors for university students to decide on an entrepreneurial career [Veciana et al., 2005, pp. 165–182].

There are many definitions of quality available in the literature. J. Juran says that quality is the fitness for use, whereas W. E. Deming assumes that quality should be aimed at the needs of present and future customers. P. B. Crosby shows that quality means the conformance to requirements. Similarly, J. S. Oakland states that quality is the meeting of the customers’ requirements [Oakland, 1994, pp. 5–9]. E. Skrzypek proves that quality is the state of mind. The author refers to the meaning of quality proposed by ancient philosophers, for instance Plato, who said that quality was the virtue according to which people were said to be such and such. He also added that quality was the property of an object that existed per se [Skrzypek, 2000, p. 15].

Thus, one can propose that the quality of the entrepreneurial attitudes is the way of positive students’ thinking about entrepreneurship or the kind of their internal property which may lead to successful entrepreneurship results.
3. Materials and methods

The research material consists of surveys completed by the students of the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdañsk (three different courses). The research was conducted in January 2015 among the randomly selected students of first and second degree studies. The characteristic of the studied group has been shown in table 1. The survey questionnaire contains eight statements. Respondents answered if they agree or disagree with them.

The results have been encoded in the Statistica 10 program. The relationship between the variables and the attributes of a group has been determined by conducting a $\chi^2$ test at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. In case the variables have been dependent, V Cramer coefficient has been calculated to determine the strength of the relationship.

Cluster analysis has been used for sorting different objects into groups in a way that the degree of association between two objects is maximal if they belong to the same group and minimal otherwise. Tree clustering for agglomeration and the Ward’s method to linkage with Euclidean distance have been used.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage [%]</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage [%]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science and Econometrics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>20 yr</td>
<td>Average = 22.1</td>
<td>20 yr</td>
<td>Average = 22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>24 yr</td>
<td>Median=22</td>
<td>25 yr</td>
<td>Median=23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration.
4. Results and discussion

The quality of the entrepreneurial attitudes of students varies, but some trends have been observed. The vast majority would prefer to become self-employed. This involves working for public organizations (62.5%) as well as the reluctance to have a boss (56.3%). Almost 73% of the respondents want to be an effective businessmen or businesswoman in spite of the lack of experience (83.3%). The declaration of the intent to start own business after finishing formal education was made by more than 45% of the respondents, whereas about 17% said that they had no willingness to conduct their own business. Only 12.5% of the respondents said that other people would not be interested in working for them. More than half of the students (54.2%) admitted that the studies prepared them well for being an entrepreneur.

The results indicate the positive attitude of students toward starting own business. The answers to individual survey’s questions did not significantly vary in relation to gender, age, degree and the field of studies ($p > \alpha$). The exception was the statement, “I prefer to be self-employed than work for the public organization.” In this case, the features differentiating the response were age ($p = 0.03$) and the degree of studies ($p = 0.02$). Most students at the age of twenty two (more than 27% of the respondents) agreed with this statement. The opposite views were represented mostly by older students, i.e. those at the age of twenty four (15% of the respondents). The first degree students more often agreed with the statement (40%). In contrast, 27% of the second degree students disagreed with the statement. The calculated V Cramer coefficients indicate the moderate correlation between entrepreneurial attitude and age ($V = 0.50$) as well as the degree of studies ($V = 0.34$).

The lack of the statistically significant differentiation of responses denotes the versatility of the statements included in the questionnaire. Therefore, the suitability of the questionnaire as a research tool for the assessment of the entrepreneurial attitudes has been confirmed. The results of the survey have been summarised in the table 2.

Due to the fact that two statements have negative consequences (i.e. “People will not be interested in working for me” and “I have no willingness to run my own business”), they have been re-coded in order to establish them as positive similarly to other statements in the questionnaire. The resulting dendrogram (figure 1) clearly distinguishes the students’ attitudes into two groups. The first agglomeration contains five statements,
which can be described as an active attitude in favor of the development of entrepreneurship. In contrast, the second agglomeration consists of three statements. Two of them specify a passive approach, which is demonstrated by the lack of willingness to operate own business as well as employment opportunities for others. It is surprising that the second agglomeration includes the statement about good preparation for being an entrepreneur during the formal education.

Figure 1. A dendrogram – entrepreneurial attitudes

Tree diagram

I prefer to be self-employed than work for the public organization
I prefer to be self-employed than to have a boss
After the end of the formal education, I will start my own business
I want to be an effective businessman/businesswoman
I have the experience of own entrepreneurship as a student
People will not be interested in working for me
I have no willingness to run my own business
The studies on my faculty have prepared me well for being an entrepreneur

Source: Own elaboration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree of studies</th>
<th>Field of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to be self-employed than work for the public organization.</td>
<td>30 (62,5%)</td>
<td>18 (37,5%)</td>
<td>1,65</td>
<td>0,19</td>
<td>12,19</td>
<td>0,03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to be self-employed than to have a boss.</td>
<td>27 (56,3%)</td>
<td>21 (43,8%)</td>
<td>0,20</td>
<td>0,65</td>
<td>7,39</td>
<td>0,19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will not be interested in working for me.</td>
<td>6 (12,5%)</td>
<td>42 (87,5%)</td>
<td>0,65</td>
<td>0,42</td>
<td>7,17</td>
<td>0,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the experience of own entrepreneurship as a student.</td>
<td>9 (18,8%)</td>
<td>39 (81,3%)</td>
<td>0,01</td>
<td>0,91</td>
<td>4,23</td>
<td>0,51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the end of the formal education, I will start my own business.</td>
<td>22 (45,8%)</td>
<td>26 (54,2%)</td>
<td>0,09</td>
<td>0,76</td>
<td>10,40</td>
<td>0,06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to be an effective businessman/ businesswoman.</td>
<td>35 (72,9%)</td>
<td>13 (27,1%)</td>
<td>1,07</td>
<td>0,30</td>
<td>5,47</td>
<td>0,36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no willingness to run my own business.</td>
<td>8 (16,7%)</td>
<td>40 (83,3%)</td>
<td>0,40</td>
<td>0,52</td>
<td>5,43</td>
<td>0,36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The studies on my faculty have prepared me well for being an entrepreneur.</td>
<td>26 (54,2%)</td>
<td>22 (45,8%)</td>
<td>0,09</td>
<td>0,77</td>
<td>3,46</td>
<td>0,63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration.
Conclusion

Choosing a career path can be one of the most important decisions people make in their lives. Doing what they enjoy and having a job they like will have a positive effect on their lives and it will ensure success [Gibson et al., 2011, pp. 11–18]. In the article, it has been shown that being an entrepreneur requires a certain attitude, commitment and positive thinking. It also requires faith in personal abilities and skills. Good quality entrepreneurial attitudes help to overcome difficulties and they motivate actions contributing to the success. As scholars show, the positive attitude influences confidence, enthusiasm, inclination and aspiration for entrepreneurship [Oyewumi, Olufemi, 2013, pp. 127–142]. The aim of the pilot research has been to identify the students’ attitudes toward entrepreneurship and future plans connected with it. Basing on the collected data, it seems that, in general, regardless of sex, the age of students as well as the field and degree of studies, the students from the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdańsk have a positive and fairly clear attitude toward entrepreneurship. They are rather interested in becoming entrepreneurs while thinking about professional life. They have no doubt that people will be interested in working for them, however, as the research has proved, they have little practical experience in the field of entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, they are convinced that they will be good businessmen or businesswomen. However, only half of the respondents believe that their own faculty has prepared them well for this task. It means that, in the future, so as not to lose the current fervor and quality of entrepreneurial attitudes, the Faculty of Management should put much more emphasis on entrepreneurial initiatives and consider the modification of the existing curricula of the different courses.

It is necessary to maintain and strengthen the existing cooperation with entrepreneurs, especially those who are the symbols of success in the region and beyond. It is also important to facilitate the contact between the students and the entrepreneurs. The examples of good practices in entrepreneurship as well as the real stories of success supplemented by the syllabi of properly composed courses will help to shape a strong belief in entrepreneurship. When it comes to the proposals for the future studies in this field, additional research should continue to examine the entrepreneurial attitudes of students in different academic contexts. Moreover, scientists should particularly pay attention to the usefulness of entrepreneurship courses found in different educational settings.
References


The quality of the entrepreneurial attitudes among the students of the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdańsk. The pilot study (Summary)

The aim of the article is to identify the attitudes of students with respect to entrepreneurship. The study has been conducted on the group of students from the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdańsk. The students represent the different courses of studies. As a result, it has been found that the quality of entrepreneurial attitudes seems satisfactory. The majority of the students, re-
gardless of the courses studied, show a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship and they are interested in running own business. However, only half of them believe that the faculty prepares them well for this task.

**Keywords**

entrepreneurship, attitude, quality