

TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES. A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Social entrepreneurship; Universities; Content analysis; University degree course description; Entrepreneurship competences.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Contemporary societies are living in uncertainty. Unemployment numbers are increasing, important economic sectors are in decline, we have seen the collapse of thousands of companies, and poverty levels and social inequalities are becoming acute. In this context, several governments are taking an active role as promoters of entrepreneurship because they see value in entrepreneurial initiatives for developing the economy.

The main focus of entrepreneurship is the business context. In Spain, government is introducing some flexibility into existing regulation in order to facilitate the creation of new firms and access to credit. The Spanish administration has proposed social protection measures for self-employed workers, and actions aimed at promoting, for example, business incubators. It is hoped that these measures will enable careers based on self-employment. However, the idea of entrepreneurship cannot be limited to achieving economic benefit or alternatives to salaried employment. There must be a

commitment to creating social benefits and social impact along the lines of non-profit organizations.

Entrepreneurial initiatives can be aimed just at creating an enterprise. However, they can also encompass creation of social impacts through a project not necessarily in the area of business. These notions have been described respectively as 'entrepreneurship' and 'social entrepreneurship'. In both cases, the definition of entrepreneurship is open. There is no consensus on how the concepts should be defined. However, there is some agreement on the potential for education systems to provide training in some of the skills required for entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship.

Education institutions that offer entrepreneurship education programs frequently focus on the creation of companies from the perspective of business project development and an emphasis on the economics. Focusing on business topics *per se* does not guarantee a training of students in social entrepreneurship. We suggest that there is a need for major changes to curricula and instructional models to reinforce a pedagogical approach that also highlights the social value of entrepreneurialism. Including in entrepreneurship education a stronger social aspect would allow the development of ways of thinking that would promote entrepreneurial activity that focuses on the social as well as the economic benefits.

In this paper, we analyze teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in the public universities in Valencia (Spain). We focus on the academic courses offered in 2011–2012 to investigate the extent of the focus on social entrepreneurship. We conduct a critical review of the degree courses in social and legal studies taught in Valencia's public universities to analyze students' training in social entrepreneurship. The results of our analysis contribute to the debate on a new conceptualization of social entrepreneurship.

The context and concept of entrepreneurship

In many countries, unemployment rates remain persistently high, average length of unemployment has increased, and youth unemployment has surged. Some countries have seen the collapse of important market sectors, and the failure of thousands of enterprises. All of this has increased social inequalities (Tanner, 2013).

In this socio-economic context, some governments are underlining the need for increased entrepreneurial activity at all levels. Entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a critical determinant of economic performance. To enhance competitive advantage, the governments in many countries have instituted regulatory changes and launched initiatives to stimulate entrepreneurial growth (Cumming *et al.*, 2009).

In the traditional perspective, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activity are a '*regional milieu of agents that is conducive to the creation of new firms*' (Audretsch and Keilbach, 2004, p. 420). In this sense, governments' main contributions to facilitate the start up of new firms should include reducing uncertainties in the tax and regulatory environment, and eliminating bureaucracy, among other things.

Most of these objectives are focused on the business development aspects of entrepreneurial projects. However, as Stryjan (2006) highlights, an entrepreneurial culture can be promoted by paying attention to social as well as economic benefits. Entrepreneurial project with social objectives will have a social impact. This perspective of entrepreneurship is essential for establishing of social entrepreneurial projects and requires training in and understanding of social entrepreneurship.

Despite the numerous descriptions of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, there is no finite and comprehensive depiction of these phenomena and no clear understanding of social entrepreneurship (Mair and Martí, 2006). Definitions of entrepreneurship are often tailored to fit specific purposes. Some theoretical

perspectives in traditional economic theory describe entrepreneurs are willing to take risks, to search for new ways to create value, to manage uncertainty, and to promote entrepreneurial behavior in others (Baumol, 1991). According to the OECD (2001), entrepreneurship is a phenomenon associated with enterprising human action in pursuit of generation of value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity enabled by identifying and exploiting new products, processes, or markets.

These definitions rely on subjectivist theories of entrepreneurship based on rational action and economic factors (Pfeilstetter, 2011). They are the most widely accepted and obey the rules of economic science and a rational and utilitarian vision of entrepreneurial projects. However, other theoretical perspectives including new elements in our understanding of entrepreneurship that extend into new fields less oriented to economic factors (Pfeilstetter, 2011). For example, the European Commission (2008) describes entrepreneurialism as the individual's ability to turn ideas into action and includes creativity, innovation, and calculated risks, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This definition suggests that entrepreneurship can be applied to range of economic activities, and in turn, that the entrepreneur plays more than one role in the economy.

The definition of social entrepreneurship includes detailed examination of the social as well as the entrepreneurial elements (Mair and Martí, 2006). Thus, the concept of social entrepreneurship means different things to different people and different researchers. Social entrepreneurship can be seen as a construct that bridges an important gap between business and benevolence; it is the application of entrepreneurship in the social sphere (Roberts and Woods, 2005). Some use the term social entrepreneurship to describe any form of moneymaking enterprise that has a social mission, or any type of

nonprofit organization that appears novel (Light, 2006), or a situation when it signals an imperative to drive social change (Martin and Osberg, 2007).

A wider perspective on entrepreneurship studies

It has been shown that entrepreneurship can be understood in different ways. The various and numerous definitions support De Souza Silva's (2007, p. 2) view that '*there is no neutral entrepreneur*'. Entrepreneurs reflect a particular way of being, thinking, and doing in relation to their reality, and make decisions and act based on their world view. This highlights the importance of social entrepreneurship competences. The teaching and learning process related to social entrepreneurship should include all of these components. Therefore, it is necessary to define the concept of social entrepreneurship and to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities that should be taught in order to condition the type of entrepreneurial activities established in the future.

Teaching social entrepreneurship is different from teaching business competences and involve different perspectives which sometimes are overlapping. Marina (2010) considers entrepreneurialism as a question of ethics. The context will depend on individual values associated with a Moral Dimension, an Intellectual Dimension, and a Social Dimension.

Thus, teaching entrepreneurship and teaching social entrepreneurship have some common elements, such as for example, the capacities to develop creative thinking, to manage complex processes, and to recognize opportunities, among others (Honig, 2004). We highlight the need to identify and make explicit the strategies specifically related to teaching social entrepreneurship.

In the context of Higher Education, which constitutes the framework for this study, we can find numerous examples of universities that have developed and implemented

entrepreneurship extracurricular initiatives such as university-business foundations, business chairs, and programs to promote the creation of spin-offs. However, efforts in higher education programs to promote knowledge, skills, and abilities related to social entrepreneurship are insufficient. University study programs mainly focus on professional training of future wage-earners and ignore the need for a spirit of social entrepreneurship among students (Vázquez *et al.*, 2006). We need to examine how the social entrepreneurship concept in education systems is conceptualized and identify the knowledge, skills and abilities related to social entrepreneurship, being promoted.

Our study which focuses on the Valencia region, examines the state of the art of entrepreneurship teaching and learning in the region's public universities and whether the approaches adopted respond to social entrepreneurship skills.

Methodology and Sample Design

Analytical strategy

We use the social science research technique of content analysis. Content analysis considers data as representations not of physical events but of texts, images, and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted on (Colyvas and Powell, 2006). Several units of unit of analysis have been proposed that encompass three types of data (Palomares-Montero, García-Aracil and Castro-Martínez, 2012). In the present paper, the unit of analysis is the university degree course outline (the official description of the degree course), and its main sections are the context units ('Justification', 'Objectives', 'Competencies', 'Student Access and Admission', 'Formal Education Planning', and 'Planning and Management of Student Mobility'); the recording units are 'Intellectual Dimension' (ability to be open to new ideas and experiences that can be applied to personal decisions, group interaction, and community betterment), 'Moral Dimension' (competencies related to the ethics, values, and morals

that guide and give meaning and direction to life), and ‘Social Dimension’ (competencies related to awareness of, participation in, and connection with the community through the setting up of supportive social networks).

Data Source

A search of the websites of the five public universities in the Valencia region (University of Valencia –UVEG–, Technical University of Valencia –UPV–, University of Alicante –UA–, Miguel Hernandez University –UMH– and Jaume I University –UJI–) identified 32 degree course descriptions for 12 degrees in the fields of social and legal studies.

Results

Entrepreneurship by dimension

Analysis of the Intellectual, Moral and Social Dimensions outlined in university degree course outlines provides an understanding of how universities train students on entrepreneurship.

We scored 43,143 indicators, of which 67.6 percent relate to the ‘Intellectual Dimension’, 26.7 percent to the ‘Social Dimension’, and 5.7 percent to the ‘Moral Dimension’. The Intellectual Dimension clearly dominates, with the effect of the Moral Dimension negligible.

All the universities in the sample refer reference in their course descriptions to indicators related to the Intellectual Dimension. The scores range from 48.1 percent for UVEG's degree in Tourism to 89.1 percent for UJI's degree in Economics. One indicator represents more than half of the frequencies for Intellectual Dimension, with a huge difference between this and the second and third most frequent indicators.

Similarly, all the universities in the sample refer in their degree descriptions to indicators related to the Moral Dimension. In this case, the percentages are lower than

for Intellectual Dimension. Scores range from 0.5 percent for UJI's degree in Economics to 10.6 percent for UA's Primary Teacher degree training. For Moral Dimension the distribution of frequencies is tighter than for Intellectual Dimension.

Social Dimension seems to have a moderate effect with all universities in the sample scoring this second after Intellectual Dimension. The scores for Social Dimension range from 10.4 percent for UJI's degree in Economics to 48.8 percent for UVEG's degree in Tourism. Similar to Intellectual Dimension, one indicator represents more than half of the frequencies reported for Social Dimension. However, the distance with the second and third indicators is smaller.

The results are illustrative of the training provided by public universities in Valencia in social entrepreneurship, as part of their social and legal studies degree courses. This reproduces entrepreneurial training related to business project development which emphasizes the economics.

Entrepreneurship by dimension and knowledge field

In this section, comparison of Valencia public universities is based on the distribution of the indicators of entrepreneurial behavior in each recording unit, in the knowledge fields of Economics, Education Sciences, and Social Sciences.

We categorize them as follows: Economics includes Business administration and management, Economics, International business, and Tourism; Education Science includes Social education, Nursery teach training, Primary teacher training, Pedagogy, and Sport and physical activity; Social Sciences includes Labor relationships, Sociology, and Social work. Analyzing by field of knowledge identifies similarities among degrees. However, the internal variability of our data does not allow generalizations to other fields of knowledge neither universities.

Economics degrees score highest for Intellectual Dimension indicators (71.5%) and lowest for Moral and Social Dimensions (3.0% and 25.5%, respectively), compared to Education Sciences and Social Sciences. In contrast, degrees in Education Sciences present the lowest percentage for Intellectual Dimension (65.0%) and the highest for Moral Dimension (8.2%), compared to Economics and Social Sciences. Social Science degrees scored 28.1 percent for the Social Dimension, the highest score among the three knowledge fields and 68.2 percent and 3.7 percent respectively for the Intellectual and Moral Dimensions.

The Intellectual Dimension scores highest for all three field, with Economics ranked first, while Education Sciences score highest for Moral Indicators and Social Sciences for Social Indicators.

Discussion and Conclusions

The review of social and legal studies degrees offered by public universities in the Valencia region allows some conclusions to be drawn about how universities train students in social entrepreneurship. Generally the universities in our sample provide training in competences related to the Intellectual Dimension in the three analyzed fields of knowledge. They also provide training in social and moral competences but with lower frequency. We can differentiate according to field of knowledge.

On the basis of field of knowledge we find that: i) Economics degrees obtained the highest percentage of indicators in Intellectual Dimension compared to the Moral and Social Dimensions; ii) Education Sciences scored the lowest percentages in the Intellectual Dimension and the highest in the Moral Dimension with intermediate scores for the Social Dimension; and, iii) Social Sciences show intermediate scores for the Intellectual and Moral Dimensions and high scores for the Social Dimension.

The Intellectual Dimension scores highest in all three cases. However, there are some differences among fields of knowledge. Economics stands out for intellectual indicators, Education predominates for moral indicators, and Social Science for social indicators.

Although we cannot draw firm conclusions, we would suggest that Economics tends to emphasize the importance of management capacity and ability to take decisions according to the traditional understanding of entrepreneurship (business perspective). This result is as expected since it is related to the training of business managers and economic analysts. However, contrary to what we expected, we do not find that degrees in Education and Social Sciences promote more moral and social than intellectual competences. Therefore, in relation to the question in the title of this paper, the enterprise perspective of universities is not expanding towards social entrepreneurship.

Our study prompts several questions. Government initiatives to promote entrepreneurship mainly adopt an economic perspective. Citizens should be enabled to engage in business development based on existing or new businesses. Businessmen and businesswomen who are more highly educated are usually flexible and better able to apply their intellectual abilities to this task, and to acquire experience in entrepreneurship through individual projects. However, knowledge about social entrepreneurship is lacking. Social entrepreneurship is related to social change, and its potential payoff is lasting, transformational benefit to society, which is what sets this field and its practitioners apart. Our analysis shows that the competences related to social entrepreneurship (Moral and Social Dimensions) tend to be ignored.

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