

Entrepreneurship education in the knowledge society: A study of University students' attitudes toward new venture creation as career choice

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Nowadays, European governments have become increasingly aware of the relevance of new venture creation as source of sustainable development, at both economic and social levels. On one hand, it is largely assumed that entrepreneurship impacts on the economic growth of a country since it represents a channel to transform ideas into economic opportunities, strengthens the competitive basis through the revitalization of the productive nets, and is a source of productivity. On the other hand, entrepreneurship is also conceived as a mean to reach social aims, such as employment generation, increase of the purchasing power of citizens, labour insertion of marginal collectives and, definitively, improvement of the quality of life in a community. Moreover, new venture creation represents a promising career choice for young people, given the current dynamics of the labour markets in Europe, characterized by the growing privatization of public enterprises, the reduction of the civil servant post available in the administration and the high requirements of professional experience imposed in most selective processes in private organizations. For these reasons, European governments claim explicitly the objective of encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives by young people and developing training programs for small enterprises by educational institutions, particularly at secondary and university levels, in so far as they are focused towards service of individuals and society. Without a doubt, the university represents the organization with the greatest capacity to generate and disseminate knowledge and to transform it into economic and social utility. It is largely assumed that the educational level acquired must qualify college students to practice a professional activity, which in turn should satisfy the demands of human capital required by the productive sector, in order to contribute to the socioeconomic welfare. Nevertheless, most university academic programs are much more centered on training wage-earner managers or technicians, than offering qualified and responsible entrepreneurs and enterprises to society. That's why in the middle of the process of adaptation of the European university systems to the requirements of the new European Space of Superior Education, it is important to reconsider whether the transformations undertaken, both in the university aims and in the way in which these must be reached, will enable a better response to the afore-mentioned social needs and expectations frequently assigned to the public university. In this paper, we revise the guidelines marked by the European Commission with regards to entrepreneurship education in public universities, and present the results from a quantitative study carried out in a Spanish University in order to analyze the preferences and attitudes of students toward business start-up as professional occupation. In our opinion, this

Consumer Behaviour

methodological approach is very useful in the study of the new role and responsibilities of public systems of superior education in the knowledge society.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Career Choice, Non-profit Organizations, European Space of Superior Education, Entrepreneurial Attitudes