REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN ENTREPRENEURIAL COGNITIONS: START-UP INTENTIONS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SPAIN (SUMMARY)

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REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN ENTREPRENEURIAL COGNITIONS: START-UP INTENTIONS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SPAIN

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Principal Topic

There is a growing concern recently about the need to understand entrepreneurial cognitions. Perceptions may be influenced by several factors, such as personal and social ones. In this sense, most research has focused on individual factors affecting entrepreneurial attitudes and, through them, intentions. On the other hand, in the light of institutional economics (North, 1990 and 2005), some authors have studied environmental factors (specifically informal elements such as the attitudes towards entrepreneurship) affecting the decision to start an entrepreneurial career. Nevertheless, much less work has been done to understand the social variables affecting these perceptions, and how they may be affected by regional differences. This paper tries to identify the elements that may be explaining regional variations in entrepreneurial cognitions, in order to analyze the relationship among motivational factors (based on Ajzen’s 1991 theory), environmental factors (based on North’s 1990 and 2005 ideas), and some control variables; and how they affect start-up intentions.

Method

For the empirical analysis, structural equation models have been used with perceptions -and particularly intention- as dependent variables. Data have been collected through an entrepreneurial intention questionnaire (EIQ) on 549 last-year university students. To allow for the analysis of regional differences, two universities from very distinct regions have been studied (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona -UAB- and University of Seville -USE-).

Results and Implications

Regulations, incentives and taxes are broadly equivalent in all Spanish regions. Therefore, entrepreneurial-intention differences should be caused by more refined cultural and social specificities. Results confirm that entrepreneurial values and valuations in each region, as perceived by the interviewees, do play a very relevant role in configuring personal attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurship. As expected, it was found that social valuation of the entrepreneur was higher in the more developed region (Catalonia), having a positive effect on perceived subjective norms and behavioral control. Conversely, in Andalusia perceived valuation in the closer environment is the most significant influence, affecting essentially personal attraction and subjective norms. Results, therefore, show how social variables help explain -at least partly- regional differences in entrepreneurial cognitions. Finally, some important implications can be derived to help public-policy decision-makers improve environmental factors affecting start-up intentions.

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