

6-12-2010

DOES ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION REALLY WORK: A LONGITUDINAL OUTCOME STUDY OF THREE UNIVERSITY-BASED E-ED PROGRAMS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Recommended Citation

Rideout, Elaine C. and Gray, Denis O. (2010) "DOES ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION REALLY WORK: A LONGITUDINAL OUTCOME STUDY OF THREE UNIVERSITY-BASED E-ED PROGRAMS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)," *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*: Vol. 30: Iss. 21, Article 3.

Available at: <http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol30/iss21/3>

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

DOES ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION REALLY WORK: A LONGITUDINAL OUTCOME STUDY OF THREE UNIVERSITY-BASED E-ED PROGRAMS

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Principal Topic

Based on the assumption that Entrepreneurship Education (E-ed) can increase the number of entrepreneurs and boost economic growth, governments worldwide have invested significant resources into an E-ed economic development strategy. But how much do we know about whether E-ed really works?

E-ed appears to be one of those phenomena where action and intervention have raced far ahead of the theory, pedagogy, and research justifying it. Our comprehensive review of the empirical literature concluded that while E-ed appears to be a promising tool for promoting economic development, its value will remain unknown without more sophisticated methodological evaluations.

The goal of the study was to identify/quantify differences in E-proclivity and behaviors between alumni who received E-ed and a matched control group who did not up to 14 years later. The study attempted to shed light on the role of promising mediators (E-self efficacy, cognition, skills, attitudes, networks, etc.).

Method

Setting: A major state engineering university in the Southeastern U.S. This university is embedded within a high-tech region, and is known for its technology focus and high-tech spin-outs. Two university undergraduate E-ed programs (engineering and business) with differing pedagogical approaches were evaluated, as well as one graduate business E-ed program.

Design: For undergraduates, the study employed a proxy pretest-post-test quasi-experimental design. For graduates, the study used a post-test only control group design. Equivalence between treatment and control groups was addressed through matching/stratifying on likely covariates.

Instrumentation: Data collection involved surveys (both email and mail) of E-ed alumni (N=2,000) and a matched (N=2,000) comparison group. The survey instrument was pre-tested by a group of local entrepreneurs/alumni/faculty experts. Specific measures included E-ed taken, background, local context, career histories and entrepreneurial intentions, activities, and accomplishments. Pre-measures included general entrepreneurship skills. Dependent variables included entrepreneurial “intentions” as well as: 1) enterprising/ intrapreneurial activities, 2) startups, and 3) business success.

Status: Data collection is completed with 624 responses received. Data analysis utilized descriptive and multivariate group difference and predictive analyses. Confirmatory factor analysis has validated the psychometric properties of the measures employed. MANOVA, MANCOVA, and SEM will test the hypotheses and the overall goodness of fit of the hypothesized causal model.

Results and Implications

Preliminary analysis of the model looks promising. Findings suggest that E-ed by itself may not produce E-outcomes. E-ed may instead produce E-outcomes through mediating mechanisms such as personal characteristics, networks, and E-self efficacy.

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