TOWARDS THE ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONALIZATION ON STUDENTS’ ENTREPRENEURIAL COGNITION (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

TOWARDS THE ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONALIZATION ON STUDENTS’ ENTREPRENEURIAL COGNITION

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Principal Topic

Scholars have studied the entrepreneurial university under different perspectives; it has been recognized as a complex organization, which needs a multilevel conceptualization that includes different goals, actors and activities throughout the whole university system. In this sense, research has revealed that university entrepreneurship generates several outcomes and depends on a number of different factors, at both regional and university level.

Among these antecedents, university internationalization is a strategy that is worth considering. In fact, despite it has received abundant attention in the higher education literature, we still miss an understanding of its contribution to the entrepreneurial university. Internationalization is absorbing increasing shares of investments and thus is becoming a central pillar of university strategies; a comprehensive appraisal of these investments would need to account for all its outcomes, including entrepreneurship.

Method

We investigate the contribution of the university internationalization to the entrepreneurial university. To advance a more holistic understanding of the entrepreneurial university that encompasses many and simultaneous outcomes beyond faculty and academic spin-off, we follow the recent suggestions from entrepreneurship literature and focus on students entrepreneurship. With respect to the internationalization, the originality of our work also lies on the fact that we study it along all the three constitutive dimensions of universities separately, so to provide a better understanding of its effect on the entrepreneurial university and to encompass the recent debate indicating that also teaching and research, and not only the third mission, may be responsible for the outcomes of the entrepreneurial university. Finally, we hypothesize that the benefits of university internationalization may be both direct, by increasing students’ human and social capital, and indirect, by making university-based entrepreneurship training and support more effective.

Our empirical analyses are based on individual-level data from GUESSS (Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students’ Survey), university-level data from EUMIDA database and Elsevier’s SciVal database.

Results and Implications

Multilevel analyses reveal that the degree of internationalization of teaching activity has a strong and positive direct effect on students’ entrepreneurship, while the degree of internationalization of research and third mission activities only affect students’ entrepreneurship indirectly, by enhancing the positive effect of university training and support mechanisms. These findings confirm that internationalization and entrepreneurship are complement and positively integrate in a comprehensive model of modern university systems; further they reveal the different roles played by the constitutive dimensions of the universities, thus providing implications for both research and practice.

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