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IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOR IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOR IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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Principal Topic

An essential aspect of bringing ideas to existing businesses is how nascent entrepreneurs quickly and appropriately find viable solutions to the various problems they encounter (Fayolle & Gailly, 2008). Studies on decision-making have characterized by individuals’ economic and plan-oriented thinking (causation) (Fisher, 2012), while another stream of research has highlighted uncertainty and creative actions (effectuation) (Read et al., 2016; Venkataraman et al., 2012). The decision-making logics, however, are extremely hard to identify and grasp, as this requires the real-life follow-up of an ongoing process (see Arend et al., 2015; Langley, 1999). We address this by focusing in depth on the venture creation processes of students during an educational intervention. Our aim is to identify students’ decision-making logics during the venture creation process in entrepreneurship education (EE), and to investigate and understand how these are transformed during the process.

Method

In addressing the decision-making logics in EE, we focused on an optional 18-week-long bachelor-level course entitled Startup!. During the course, the students were required to craft business ideas and to set up businesses. We employ survey and observation data by applying mixed methods. Our longitudinal survey data comprised three surveys collected via an internet-aided tool (n=49). The constructs of causation and effectuation were measured with previously tested scales (Chandler et al., 2011). Non-participant observation data focus on venture creation processes of four different startups and data were analysed thematically.

Results and Implications

Our findings bring the theories of causation and effectuation into the teaching of entrepreneurship (Fayolle, 2013). The study highlights the existence and nature of decision-making logics during the venture creation process. More importantly, we illustrated how these logics transform over time. Our findings introduce transformation patterns—doubts how to proceed, unwillingness to proceed, and team dynamics—that lead individuals towards coping decision-making logics, during which no causation or effectuation is emphasized. Our findings show that, despite this stage, the process continues: Even if no new businesses would be launched, EE generates learning outcomes that improve students’ understanding of entrepreneurship and of themselves as entrepreneurs. Our findings can be utilized in designing educational programs and in planning interventions to support venture creation processes.

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