FROM INTENT TO ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTION AMONG MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: THE NEED TO SPREAD OUTSIDE THE BUSINESS SCHOOLS (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

FROM INTENT TO ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTION AMONG MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: THE NEED TO SPREAD OUTSIDE THE BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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Principal Topic

Based on an international literature review, this longitudinal study is conducted within the Entrepreneurial Profile (EP), in which undergrads from 35 programs can enroll in courses, tutorials and coaching embedded within their curriculum (www.profentrepreneurial.ulaval.ca). However, most empirical studies on students’ entrepreneurial attitudes, intentions and self-efficacy have been performed in business and engineering. By differentiating between students’ motivations to enroll, project ideas, entrepreneurial intent, vision and actions, we investigate the links behind these variables and interdisciplinary entrepreneurship education (Levenburg, 2003; Galloway & Keogh, 2006). EP’s objectives extend from one to four years: attract, identify, express and nurture their entrepreneurial potential and competencies, enabling undergrads to experiment venturing in a learning secure environment.

Method and results

Since 2004, 1085 undergrads from 55 programs were surveyed: 250 interviews produced 140 enrolments in ventures linked to their specialization. These potential entrepreneurs have been trained and coached by counselling and entrepreneurship educators, their endeavors being constantly monitored. Fifty in-depth interviews revealed the factors underlying their intent, motivation, constraints and solutions, moving from their initial intentions to formal action. Findings from content analysis and SPSS are consistent with our objectives: most students complete their EP before graduation, whilst less than 30% started their venture right away, as many choose to gain experience, find partners and financing.

Results and Implications

As this meso-program will continue its interdisciplinary expansion, the variables and gaps between intention and action remain numerous, several hundred respondents being needed before asserting any predictable model. However, fostering entrepreneurship among all disciplines, lighting up undergrads in their classrooms and bringing them into realistic endeavors looks like a promising breakthrough. Entrepreneurship education needs not to be considered as standardized: one size doesn’t fit all and tailor-made implementations are needed at all levels (Hannon, 2005; Wilson, 2007). While their work load increase, most entrepreneurship educators must become entrepreneurs but the more we expand, the more we overlap the education system limits (Todorovic, 2005). University intrapreneurs should not be seen as salaried employees under standard supervision and appraisal. Developing and coaching entrepreneurs, fostering enterprise creations and wealth exceed most educators’ duties. We must address these discrepancies before they hinder the sustainability of our pedagogical innovations.

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