THE PROCESS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING: A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH AND EMPIRICAL TEST (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

Mahamadou Biga-Diambeidou
ICN Business School – CEREFIGE, France and Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium, mahamadou.biga@icn-groupe.fr

Benoît Gailly
Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium

Hareesh Mavoorish
ICN Business School – CEREFIGE, France

Edina Eberhardt
ICN Business School – CEREFIGE, France

Olga Ivanova
ICN Business School – CEREFIGE, France

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Principal Topic

Understanding the entrepreneurial processes and how we can inspire and teach entrepreneurship is currently one of the core issues of the European Union 2020 strategic plan. Despite increasing research interest on the topic, the literature reveals that it is still unclear to what extent such education impacts the level of graduate entrepreneurship or whether it enables graduates to become more effective entrepreneurs (Pittaway and Cope, 2007). Simulation-based learning has been highlighted as a method for engaging students more actively in the entrepreneurial learning process (Politis, 2005; Honing 2004; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001). But the impact of entrepreneurial simulation is still poorly understood and represents a significant future research activity (Honing, 2004). Building on entrepreneurial action and diversity theories (McMullen and Shepherd, 2006; Jackson, May and Whitney, 1995; Cox, 1993) our research aims to offer a new literature on entrepreneurial learning context by investigating the following research question: Who learns more and why? We provide a research model investigating whether team characteristics enhance team performance and learning by facilitating entrepreneurial action. Specifically, the study explores the mediating effects of entrepreneurial team diversity on the relationship between team characteristics, entrepreneurial action and team performance.

Method

Our study is situated in an original entrepreneurial education program with a cohort of 400 graduate students concentrated in business. The adopted approach including observation, survey, documents and secondary data from the simulator allowed us to collect rich and unique database at both individual and team level. Data analysis utilized descriptive and multivariate group difference. Structural Equation Modeling is used to test the hypotheses and the overall goodness of fit of the hypothesized causal model.

Results and Implications

This study provides important empirical verification and extension of the framework in the process of entrepreneurship learning. It contributes to the ongoing debate on entrepreneurial learning as an experiential process and advances our knowledge on how to develop the graduate student ability to discover and exploit entrepreneurial opportunity, and to cope with the liability of newness.

CONTACT: Mahamadou Biga-Diambeidou; mahamadou.biga@icn-groupe.fr; (T): +32472721573; ICN Business School, 3 place Edouard Branly, 57070 Metz, France.