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**THE ROAD FROM SCHOOL TO REAL LIFE:
ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG ROMANIAN
STUDENTS**

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Abstract

The new social and economic global outlook claims that European Union should take coherent strategic actions in training and education in order to better react to some challenges like the growing unemployment among young citizens, the new technologies and learning methods and entrepreneurial skills development. According to the 2020 Entrepreneurship Action Plan, education and training play an essential role in nurturing new generations of entrepreneurs. In this context, the present paper aims to measure the entrepreneurial intention among the Romanian students, to identify the main predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour and to generate the skills profile of the entrepreneur according to students' perceptions. In order to reach the purpose of the study, a students' survey was conducted across fundamental study domains in an average-sized and diversified university in Romania. According to students' perceptions, entrepreneurship is considered to be a science rather than an art, and the university should be concerned with entrepreneurial skills development no matter what the fundamental field is, which is considered by students as being core competences across fields.

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Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial skills, predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour, students.

1. Introduction

During the last two decades, the higher education at the national and at EU level has recorded major changes in terms of organization, curriculum and strategy. These changes within the higher



education institutions are correlated with the dynamics and the volatility of the labour market and economic outlook at the global level. Thus, these days, the higher education institutions are facing major challenges: (1) The urgent correlation of the competences and qualifications provided through the curriculum by universities with the required skills on the labour market, (2) the urgent correlation between the educational offer of the universities and the long term qualifications requirements, (3) the correlation between the disciplines within the curriculum and the required competences on the labour market, (4) the usage of new teaching methods and new contexts of learning that will allow the acquisition of new competences that are not provided using the traditional way of teaching but are very important for employers.

Within the light of the new European Union outlook of the higher education institution mission, the entrepreneurial education is very important. According to Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, education and training play an essential role in nurturing new generations of entrepreneurs. The European Commission through different communications drew up the attention regarding the importance of the entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skill development in EU universities. In this line some EU communications should be mentioned: "Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources" (2013), "European higher education in the world" (2013), "Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes" (2012), "Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernization of Europe's higher education systems" (2011). Also, in this context, we should mention the interventions of the European Parliament which through several resolutions (2013 and 2015) emphasized the importance of the general entrepreneurial skills development for the young people and called on the Member States to give them greater weight in their universities curriculum.

Also, the European Parliament, the European Commission and Eurydice Network have underlined that students participating in entrepreneurship education are more likely to start their own business and their companies tend to be more innovative and more successful than those led by people without entrepreneurship education backgrounds. If the USA and China have adopted concret measures to stimulate entrepreneurial behaviour through education, there is a certain gap in the UE regarding concret actions for entrepreneurial development. Thus, the entrepreneurial education development in EU countries is under the level needs because of the lack of correlation between research, knowledge generation, education and business environment. In Romania the entrepreneurial education is less structured and strategy-orientated than in other UE countries, even if some Romanian universities have adopted different approaches and have implemented different European funded projects for entrepreneurial education development. Still, such initiatives are isolated and without significant results. Thus, according to European statistics, in Romania about 10% entrepreneurs have a strong education in entrepreneurship, while the European value is around 30%. It should be noted that in Romania, over the last years, different non-profit associations, and also governmental agencies have adopted and implemented different initiatives to support entrepreneurial education for start-ups development.

Regarding the entrepreneurial potential, different studies conducted in Romania (EY Romania, 2014) have found a high intention of entrepreneurship among students in different universities. In spite of the high entrepreneurial intention, the numbers of those students that will be actually involved in the entrepreneurship is quite low.

In the context described above, the present paper has the purpose to measure the entrepreneurial intention among students, to identify the main predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour and also the main barriers for entrepreneurship in students' perception and to generate the skills profile of the entrepreneur according to students. Thus, the main research questions in this study were:

What really is the entrepreneurship? Is it something that can be learned? Or Is it something that "he / she was born with"?

What are the main skills of the entrepreneur?

What are the main predictors for entrepreneurship behaviour?

2. The Entrepreneurship - an Overview on International Research

2.1. Can We Learn to Become Entrepreneurs?

Over the last decade the entrepreneurship has been one of the most important research fields in different areas of study. The flourishing of the entrepreneurship as a research field is connected with the fact that today, entrepreneurship is largely recognized as a key factor in economic growth, job creation and economic sustainable development. Over time researchers have analyzed entrepreneurs and tried to identify which are the factors that explain the fact that some people are involved in entrepreneurship behaviour and others are not involved in such behaviour, finding out whether there is a general pattern for entrepreneurs, in order to design a skills profile of the entrepreneur.

One of the debates in the international research is the one regarding the nature of entrepreneurship. In this debate researchers tried to find out if entrepreneurship is something that can be learned or something that someone is born with. In general terms entrepreneurship is seen as an art and a science, the latter being seen as "teachable", the former generally not (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, UK, 2015). Even if there are some certain personality characteristics and attributes associated with the entrepreneurial behaviour that cannot be learnt, all the time, Peter Drucker argued that "most of what you hear about entrepreneurship is all wrong. It is not magic; it is not mysterious; and it has nothing to do with genes. It is a discipline and, like any discipline, it can be learned". According to the World Economic Forum (2009) "all human beings are inherently entrepreneurial, that is, entrepreneurial potential is in all of us". But, according to Marques and Albuquerque (2012) there are some qualities that cannot be taught, but certain competencies can be stimulated, trained and potentiated to become an entrepreneur. The same idea was underlined by Henry et al (2005) claiming that certain aspects of entrepreneurship can successfully be taught. Also, Vaidya (2014) claimed that the question if the entrepreneurs are born is no longer a relevant one, because entrepreneurship is, in fact, multi-dimensional. The same author claimed that broadly, entrepreneurship education involves attitudes, skills and personal qualities. Within this debate, there is a common point. Entrepreneurship is a mix between some personal characteristics and abilities, knowledge and skills acquired / developed through learning within the education system and from the real life. More recently entrepreneurship is being viewed as a way of thinking and behaving (Cooney, 2012).

2.2. What Are the Skills and the Personal Features of the Entrepreneurs?

If the entrepreneurial skills can be developed through education, an important aspect is to establish a pattern of the entrepreneurial skills. So, what are the entrepreneur skills (ES)?

During the time different researches focused on ES identification. As Chell (2013) claimed, in general, skills should be understood as being something that can be learnt and improved with practice. Henry (2005) considered the entrepreneur is an individual who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities; gather the necessary resources to take advantage of them, and initiate. In this light, the most important skills of the entrepreneur are the capacity in finding business opportunity, the capacity to capitalize on the business opportunity. The same idea is concluded by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (UK, 2015) in one of its research report, entrepreneurship skills are associated with competence in the process of opportunity identification (and/or creation), the ability to capitalize on identified opportunities and a range of skills associated with developing and implementing business plans to enable such opportunities to be realized. A synthetic frame of the most important findings regarding the entrepreneurial skills and features is presented in Table no. 1.

Table 1. Entrepreneurial skills and features – synthesis based on literature review

Author	Entrepreneurial skills and characteristics (features)
Kutzhanova et al. (2009)	<p>Technical Skills (which are those skills necessary to produce the business's product or service);</p> <p>Managerial Skills (which are essential to the day-to-day management and administration of the company);</p> <p>Entrepreneurial Skills (which involve recognizing economic opportunities and acting effectively on them);</p> <p>Personal Maturity Skills (which include self-awareness, accountability, emotional skills, and creative skills).</p>
O'Hara (2011)	<p>The ability to identify and exploit a business opportunity;</p> <p>The human creative effort of developing a business or building something of value;</p> <p>A willingness to undertake risk;</p> <p>Competence to organize the necessary resources to respond to the opportunity.</p>
Chell (2013)	<p>Idea identification/creation (Idea generation / envisioning; opportunity recognition and means-end analysis; ability to acquire information about a potential opportunity; domain knowledge and associated skills; recognition of social / market need);</p> <p>Capitalising on ideas (Awareness of environment and factors conducive to opportunity exploitation, Ability to garner the necessary material resources, Ability to convince others of the value of an opportunity, Networking and social embedding)</p> <p>Traits/behaviours (Self-belief, self-awareness, trust in own judgement etc.; Ability to manage risk and shoulder responsibility; Ability to endure and cope with difficulties. Energy, motivation, persistence etc.)</p> <p>Managerial/leadership skills (Ability to manage others, ability to overcome institutional and other constraints, ability to develop an idea as a commercial opportunity, Decision-making capability).</p>
European Commission (2012)	<p>Competences/knowledge (Activity on one's own and within a team; Identification and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses; Risk evaluation; Project planning and management; Financial administration; Negotiation and representation)</p> <p>Attitude/personal attributes (Initiative, proactivity, independence, tenacity, creativity, innovation, motivation in order to achieve objectives, responsibility, leadership).</p> <p>Putting ideas into practice (Creativity, innovation)</p>

Source: Authors' work based on literature review

In conclusion, the entrepreneur profile is a matrix that combine knowledge, competences, personal abilities and the capacity to put ideas into practice and capitalize on the opportunity, as presented in Table no. 2.

Table 2. Entrepreneur skills and abilities profile – synthesis based on literature review

KNOWLEDGE Acquired through: Entrepreneurial education and real life experiences	ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS Developed through: Entrepreneurial education and real life experiences
Understanding the economy and the business environment	Strategic vision
Understanding a business and the way in which it works	Ability to organize activities
Understanding entrepreneurial ethics	Ability to communicate
Understanding the process and procedures associated to the establishment and operation of an enterprise (for example production, management, marketing)	Ability to coordinate activities
	Ability to identify new opportunities and act rapidly to capitalize on them
	Identification and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses.
	Risk assessment
	Planning
	Synthetic thinking (capacity to structure, synthesize)
	Analytical thinking (capacity to analyze a phenomenon)
	Critical thinking (capacity to formulate and present critical point of views)
	Negotiation and representation
	Capacity to decide independently and shoulder responsibility for own decisions
	Capacity to develop and maintain long term relations
PUTTING THE IDEA INTO PRACTICE CAPITALIZING ON THE OPPORTUNITY, CREATIVITY, INNOVATION	PERSONAL ABILITIES ("born with")
	Initiative, proactivity, independence, tenacity, creativity, innovation, self-confidence, motivation in order to achieve objectives, responsibility, ability to mobilize other people's capacities, ability to you're your point of view understood by others.

Source: Authors' work based on literature review

3. Research Methodology

The students' survey was conducted in a diversified medium-sized university from Romania, during the period 10 April - 5 Jun 2016. The data were collected from a sample consisting of 322 students, in 5 fundamental study fields: engineering sciences, biological and biomedical sciences, social sciences, humanist sciences and arts, science of sports and physical education. The reliability of the developed scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha tests. Thus, for measuring the entrepreneur skill there was used a 13-item scale, each item being assessed using a 5-steps Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha for the 13 items achieved a value of 0.847 that confirmed the internal consistency of the measurement scale developed. Also, for measuring the entrepreneur behaviour predictors there was used a 10-item scale, each item being assessed using a 5-steps Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha for the 10 items achieved a

value of 0.798 that confirmed the internal consistency of the measurement scale developed. The validity of the developed scale was achieved in the context of literature review.

4. Empirical Findings

According to the students’ survey results, a relatively high entrepreneurial potential was identified within the university where the study was conducted, according to the central tendency assessed to the entire sample level. Thus, up to 60.9% of the surveyed students are thinking to start their own businesses. Looking at the fundamental study fields, the highest entrepreneurial potential was identified as follows: (1) Science of sports and physical education, (2) engineering sciences, (3) social sciences. However, most students that have a high entrepreneurial intention will develop a start-up after graduation, 40.4% considering that they will become entrepreneurs in 1-3 years time. Looking at the South-Muntenia Region contexts, the surveyed students consider that there is a medium level of business opportunities, according to the central tendency assessed at the entire sample level (M=3,3292). The most important favourable factors for doing businesses in the South-Muntenia Region, according to students’ perceptions, are: (1) The favourable geographic position, (2) the opportunity of accessing the European funds, (3) the high qualified human resources, (4) the industrial development. The three top most attractive business domains, according to the students with a high intension of entrepreneurship for developing a start-up are as follows: (1) Services, (2) commerce, (3) agriculture.

Regarding the inhibitors of the entrepreneurial behaviour, according to the empirical findings, the students considered the lack of initial capital for starting the business as the most important barrier to entrepreneurship. The second inhibitor underlined by students was the lack of entrepreneur experience and the lack of knowledge of entrepreneurship. These two factors are by far the most important barriers to entrepreneurship. However, the empirical findings underlined some other inhibitors with medium importance as follows, that are intenal and external contextual ones: (1) The high level of taxes, (2) the unfavorable legislation, (3) the difficulties in accessing the crediting, (4) the fear of failure.

Asking the students if the professional training of an entrepreneur is important, most of them put a great emphasis on the qualification and learning as a key factor for entrepreneurship. This is sustained by the central tendency assessed at the entire sample level (M=4,5776).

For developing the entrepreneur skills profile, in students’ perceptions, there were selected 13 skills and abilities based on the literature review, according to table no.3.

Table 3. The entrepreneur abilities and skills profile

Skills and Abilities	Main value	Ranking
The decision-making capacity under stress	4.4068	8
Strategic thinking	4.5745	1
Synthetic thinking	4.1708	13
Analytic thinking	4.1925	12
Creative thinking	4.5732	2
The capacity of identifying and capitalizing on opportunities	4.4845	4
The capacity to make your point of view understood by others	4.3851	7

Communication Skills	4.5670	3
Organizational capacity	4.2547	10
Coordination skills	4.4099	7
Capacity to mobilize other people	4.2640	9
Negotiation skills	4.4286	6
The capacity to identify and manage the risks	4.4378	5

Source: Authors' work using SPSS

According to the empirical results presented in Table no.3, the surveyed students are aware that an entrepreneur should have an entire set of skills and abilities, all the measured items recorded main values up to 4 (on a high extent). However, some abilities and skills are more important than others. Thus, in students' perception an entrepreneur has, first of all, very good strategic thinking and he/she is a very creative person and a very good communicator. Also, an entrepreneur has a very good capacity of identifying and capitalizing on the opportunities, and also a very good capacity of identifying and managing risks, being a good negotiator (figure no.1).

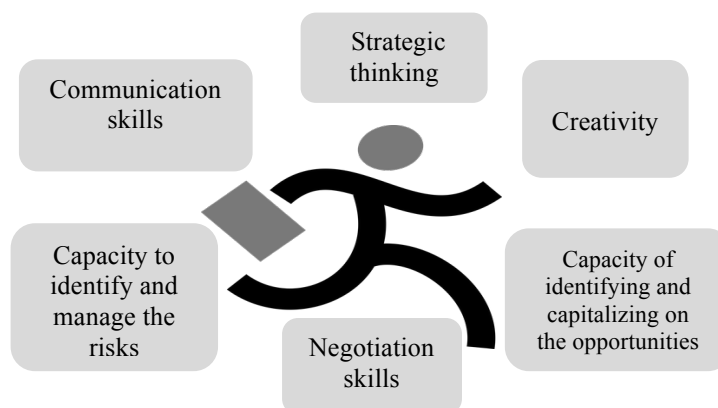


Figure 1. The profile of the entrepreneur – the top 6 skills and abilities
 (Source: Authors' work based on the empirical findings of the students' survey)

Looking at the top 6 abilities and skills of the entrepreneur, according to the surveyed students, the further question is: Can these abilities and skills be developed through entrepreneurial education? According to students' perception, the university should contribute to a high extent to developing the thinking and the skills of entrepreneurship. This is sustained by the central tendency assessed at the entire sample level ($M=4,3043$). Also, the surveyed students appreciated that the entrepreneurship is a science ($M=3,6938$) rather than an art ($M=3,4483$). However, they admit that some personal abilities are something that an entrepreneur is born with. Other important research questions in this study were related with identification of the entrepreneurship motivators. Why have some students got an entrepreneurial intention? What is motivating them? What is behind entrepreneurial behaviour?

In order to assess the predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour among students we used 10 items that combine personal, professional and social motivators of the entrepreneurship, presented in table no. 4. These motivators are the "catalysts" of the entrepreneurial behaviour.

Table 4. The predictors of the entrepreneur behaviour

Predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour	Main value	Ranking
The desire of being one's own boss	4.0467	7
Personal fulfilment	4.3230	2
Professional fulfilment	4.4596	1
Increased quality of life	4.2430	4
Job security	4.0745	6
The desire to capitalize on opportunities	4.1056	5
Higher incomes	4.2609	3
A better social status	3.9376	9
Personal and professional development solution	3.9500	8
Respect for the entrepreneurs	3.6238	10

Source: Authors' work using SPSS

According to the empirical findings students are motivated, first of all, by personal and professional fulfilment in order to engage in entrepreneurial behaviour. Also, the higher income and the higher quality of life are representing important predictors for such a behaviour. An interesting predictor was identified as the desire of capitalizing on the opportunities. Thus, proactivity is an important feature of the entrepreneurship. Finally, in the top six motivators of the entrepreneurial behaviour, in students' perception, we can find the security of the self-employment status.

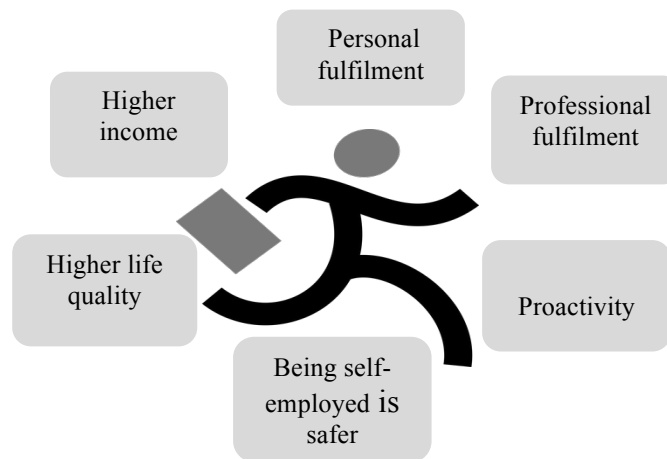


Figure 2. The predictors of the entrepreneurial behaviour – the top 6 motivators

(Source: Authors' work based on the empirical findings of the students' survey)

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The present study aims to measure the entrepreneurial potential among Romanian students, to design the entrepreneur profile according to students' perceptions, to identify the predictors of the entrepreneurial behaviour that explain why some students are willing to engage in an entrepreneurial behaviour and to measure the students' expectations regarding the entrepreneurial education and

university contribution to such education. Also, in this study, we measured students' perceptions regarding the core nature of entrepreneurship – art vs. science, in order to bring an additional insight in this debate. The entrepreneurship is more important than ever being considered an important global economic growth key. The entrepreneurial education has become more and more important, entrepreneurial skills becoming a transversal competence across the educational fields. However, the development of these skills still poses a challenge for many universities. Thus, in the light of the present study findings some questions are raising: Does the current curriculum contribute to the development of the entrepreneurial skills, regardless the fundamental study domain? Are these skills really transversal across the fundamental study domains? Does university really develop the strategic thinking of the students? How can the university stimulate the creativity of the students? These kinds of questions are fundamental in developing the curriculum for entrepreneurial education and remain a challenge for higher education institutions in the global economic outlook. But, which are the skills and abilities that the university should consider in curriculum development for delivering the entrepreneurial education programs? According to the international research the profiling of the entrepreneurial skills and features is still a topic under debate. From this debate rises the conclusion that there is a certain set of entrepreneurial skills and abilities that combine some personal features of the individual with certain features developed through education. Also, the debate regarding the nature of the entrepreneurship is still an open topic. According to the empirical findings of the students survey the top six entrepreneurial skills are related to strategic thinking, creativity, communication, capacity of identifying and capitalizing on the opportunities, capacity of identifying and managing risks, and negotiation. However, the surveyed students admit that entrepreneurship is based on a complex set of abilities and skills. Without underestimating the importance of some personal abilities and features of the individual, we can conclude that, on a high extent, the top six identified entrepreneurial skills can be developed through education. This results sustain what Drucker (1993) underlined about entrepreneurship: "It is not magic; it is not mysterious; and it has nothing to do with genes. It is a discipline and, like any discipline, it can be learned.". Also, in this line the World Economic Forum (2009) argued that "all human beings are inherently entrepreneurial, that is, entrepreneurial potential is in all of us". However, some people engage in entrepreneurial behaviour and others do not engage in such behaviour. If there is an entrepreneurial potential in each and every individual, what makes the difference between entrepreneurs and those that remain at the employee status? The differences can be found in a complex mix of internal (individual) and external (environmental) contextual factors, and also in the predictors of entrepreneurship, representing some motivators correlated with entrepreneurial behaviour. According to the students' survey, the personal and professional fulfilment were the most important predictors, but also the secure life achieved through higher income and a higher quality of life. Also, students are ready to engage in entrepreneurship considering the security of the self-employee status. The empirical findings pointed out that the social aspects such as a "better social status" or the "respect for the entrepreneurs" are the least important motivators. An interesting result is the fact that proactivity is a predictor of entrepreneurship, while the desire to capitalize on the opportunities was assessed as an important motivator of the entrepreneurship. Behind the motivation of the entrepreneurial behaviour there are many inhibiting factors with external contextual bases such as high taxes, unfavourable legislation, difficulties in accessing crediting for funding the business and so on, and also inhibiting factors with internal contextual

bases such as the lack of experience and entrepreneurial knowledge, the fear of failure, that are diminishing the entrepreneurial behaviour. Thus, even if in this study we identified a relatively high entrepreneurial potential, it can be expected that only a small part of this potential to become effective entrepreneurship in a long run. The present study brings its contribution to a better understanding of the entrepreneurship, in general terms, and also to a better understanding of the core nature of the entrepreneurial behaviour, presenting the entrepreneur skills and abilities profile that was developed based on the empirical data collected in a students' survey. Thus, the empirical findings bring additional insights regarding different aspects of the entrepreneurship representing a decision-making support for the managers within the higher education institutions in order to develop entrepreneurial education.

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