

Projects with and on Entrepreneurship at Petrosani University

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Abstract

The paper presents the role of entrepreneurial education in modern society in the context of the emergence of student entrepreneurial societies as a necessity in Romanian universities. After highlighting the main tools for educating the entrepreneurial spirit presented in the legal regulations, we have presented the projects carried out by the Student Entrepreneurial Society of the University of Petroșani, respectively the four projects financed by the institutional development funds and one project financed by the Operational Programme Human Capital.

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1. Introduction

The development of entrepreneurship is the foundation of any competitive economy, and its stimulation and support are tools without which the economic well-being of a country cannot be achieved in the long term. Increasing concerns about the development of entrepreneurship show that entrepreneurs are increasingly considered a fundamental resource for society and are the most important actors of the modern economy on which the prosperity of a society depends.

In this context, the role of universities in entrepreneurship education is amplified, this aspect being also captured by the specialized literature part of this paper as well as by the following paragraphs, in which we have showed how the University of Petroșani, through the projects implemented in the area of entrepreneurship, created the influencing framework of the entrepreneurial intention of the students involved in these projects.

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2. Specialized Literature

The positive influence that entrepreneurship has on innovation, economic growth, employment and poverty reduction, has determined the concern of specialists to identify ways to stimulate entrepreneurship, among the identified factors being entrepreneurship education (Saura J.R., Palos-Sanchez P. & Grilo A., 2019). Thus, in the last three decades there has been an increase in the number and forms of programmes and tools dedicated to entrepreneurship education. And in the specialized literature, the concern of specialists to identify the means and factors that can influence the increase in the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education by assimilating it as a dynamic concept that reflects personal values, society changes and cultural differences, has increased (Navarro A.M., Medina-Garrido J.A., Velicia-Martín F. 2021).

From a conceptual point of view, *entrepreneurial education* has been studied and presented *synthetically* as a tool to promote entrepreneurial intention but also *in a more general sense* as a learning activity that aims to improve knowledge, attitudes or skills of an entrepreneurial nature.

Some specialists (Jena, R. K., 2020; Loi, M., Fayolle, A., van Gelderen, M., Riot, E., Refai, D., Higgins, D., Cavarretta, F. 2022; Wang, S. M., Yueh, H. P., & Wen, P. C. 2019) have shown that entrepreneurial skills are not innate, they can be acquired through proper education and, increasingly, nowadays, economic theory shows that entrepreneurship education can influence young people's intention towards entrepreneurship.

In the approach of entrepreneurial education, the role of universities that have the necessary tools to help students consider starting a business as a career option is important, and it is expected that they implement appropriate entrepreneurial education programmes by integrating new perspectives of entrepreneurship conception into the current models of teaching and practical integration of entrepreneurial knowledge (Isac, C., Iordache, A. M. M., Baltador, L., Coculescu, C., & Niță, D. 2023). As a result, these learning places of entrepreneurship education promote exploration and not adaptation to existing schemes and must pursue long-term results by finding a balance between pedagogical methods and specific results (Nabi, G., Linan, F., Fayolle, A., Krueger, N., & Walmsley, A., 2017). So, it is necessary to introduce the subjects and learning outcomes aimed at entrepreneurship education into the curricula so that the influence generated by the dissemination of information specific to the entrepreneurial environment on the entrepreneurial potential of students and their entrepreneurial intentions is adapted to as many students as possible (Navarro A.M., Medina Garrido J.A.M. & Martin F.V., 2021).

Neglecting any of these components directs the formative action towards contexts unsuitable for education, therefore it is estimated that the specific dimensions of entrepreneurial education are:

➤ *The descriptive-informative dimension* aims at the acquisition by students of the necessary knowledge for the initiation, development and success of a business, including the drawing up of business development plans;

➤ *The normative dimension* refers to the acquisition of information regarding the legal regulations that regulate the conduct of activities within a company;

➤ *The questioning-reflexive and valuing dimension* that takes into account the observance of the ethical principles necessary in the development of business relations;

➤ *The practical dimension* through which entrepreneurial behaviours acquired through entrepreneurial workshops are formed.

As a component of economic education, entrepreneurship education aims at gathering the skills and abilities necessary for the development of an entrepreneurial society. The characteristics of modern entrepreneurial education are the formation of cooperation skills, the ability to think rationally and analytically, to stimulate the student's business aspirations.

3. Project on Entrepreneurship at the University of Petroșani

In Romania, the communist regime was a powerful annihilator of entrepreneurial tendencies and, at the same time, destroyer of private property. In this national context and following the example of Western European or American universities, the university system has gone through continuous changes in recent decades to ensure the compatibility of the study programmes that provide economic education, and especially entrepreneurial education.

The University of Petroșani, like the other Romanian universities, has joined the strategic development process at all levels in order to evolve towards a committed and entrepreneurial university, with a strong impact on the business environment. Thus, it is continuously aimed that the number of educational programmes, the content of curricula related to entrepreneurship and extracurricular activities for entrepreneurial education, including training companies (Isac C., 2017) continuously develop.

According to the Order of the Minister of National Education ORDER no. 3262 of February 16, 2017 regarding the organization and operation of student entrepreneurial societies in the higher education system, the Student Entrepreneurial Society SAS UPET was established in the University of Petroșani, and its objective and mission is to create a conducive environment and a complementary framework for the support and development of the entrepreneurial spirit of students, from all education cycles, including among our own graduates in the last three years.

In order to achieve these objectives, it is important to financially support the activities carried out in order to facilitate the mobility of students, the arrangement of appropriate spaces and the preparation of didactic and promotional materials. Thus, starting from 2017 and until now, the members of the Student

Entrepreneurial Society SAS_UPET have applied and won the annual competitions organized by the National Council for the Financing of Higher Education through the Institutional Development Fund - Domain 4 Supporting the activities of student entrepreneurial societies (SAS).

The status of projects financed for SAS UPET activities

Table 1

| Year | Project Name | Value of the project |
|-------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 2017 | Be an entrepreneur, be active in SAS UPET!", CNFIS-FDI-2017-0407, | 49500 lei |
| 2018 | "START-Upet: Student Entrepreneurs for Tomorrow's Romania, trained at the University of Petroșani", CNFIS-FDI-2018-0302 | 70400 lei |
| 2019 | Successful entrepreneur with S.A.S. UPET!", CNFIS-FDI-2019-0729 | 91200 lei |
| 2020 | Choose the initiative! Choose involvement! Join SAS-UPET!", CNFIS-FDI-2020-0103 | 136932 lei |
| 2021 | Competitiveness, Initiative, Creativity with SAS UPET – CIC SAS-UPET" CNFIS-FDI-2021-0213 | 120300 lei |
| 2022 | Dream, Dare, Act with SAS UPET!", CNFIS-FDI-2022-0109 | 110000 lei |
| 2023 | Sustainable entrepreneurship through education at SAS UPET", CNFIS-FDI-2023-0021 | 57550 lei |

The main purpose of these projects is to modernize the institutional tools regarding the organization of activities for the development of SAS UPET as a development engine of the entrepreneurial spirit and supporting business initiatives and the main specific objectives follow:

➤ *Development of a favourable institutional framework for supporting student entrepreneurial initiatives* (organizing the team, attracting new members, promoting the image, organizing SAS-Day, modernizing the co-working spaces and the SAS headquarters;

➤ *Organizing courses to increase the entrepreneurial skills of students and teachers* by organizing the entrepreneurial skills postgraduate course and the Business Mind and Business Ethics courses;

➤ *Stimulating the entrepreneurial potential of students and graduates* by organizing team buildings; of the Entrepreneurship and business ideas section within the Student Symposium of the Faculty of Sciences, participation in events organized by other universities in the country and the business environment, organization of competitions for presentation of business plans and ideas, etc.

➤ *Getting to know the local and regional business environment*, organizing debates on the capitalisation of the ecotourism heritage and the implications on the business environment, visiting the benchmark industrial companies in the county, training with entrepreneurs from the region, etc.

➤ *Supporting the active relationship between students - mentors - the business environment* by organizing entrepreneurial workshops, publishing the *ProAntrepreneur Magazine*, organizing mentoring and counselling activities

An important landmark in the context of entrepreneurial education is "EU - ENTREPRENEUR - increasing the participation of students from vulnerable categories in undergraduate study programmes through entrepreneurial innovation" project POCU/379/6/21/ project code 125144, Project co-financed from the European Social Fund through The Operational Programme Human Capital which allowed the involvement of an important target group, namely 450 students and approximately 2000 high school students in over 100 specific activities starting from experience exchanges with entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial workshops, visits to high schools, entrepreneurial reading evenings etc. The significant duration of the project, i.e. 30 months, allowed that in addition to the multiple extracurricular activities and complementary online courses, the teachers involved had the opportunity to evaluate the effects of the project's implementation on the students' entrepreneurial behaviour.

One of the evaluation tools was the application of online questionnaires to the target group of students of this project, with the aim of identifying the main factors that these students consider important for the development of entrepreneurial skills.

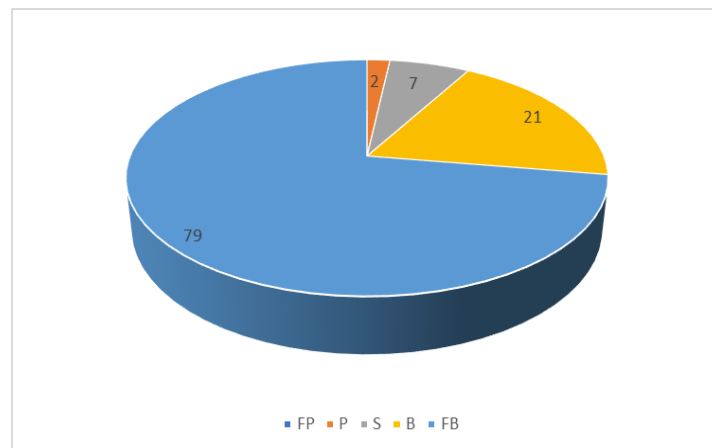


Figure 1. Answers on the effect of extracurricular activities

The questionnaire was applied to a number of 109 students from all three faculties of the University of Petrosani, from different years of study and was applied online between May 2022 and July 2022. We note that the applied questionnaire included a large number of questions, for publication in this article, the answers to four questions regarding the factors that can influence the development of entrepreneurial skills have been selected.

Regarding the question of whether the involvement of students in project activities allowed an increase in entrepreneurial skills, almost 80% of the surveyed

students answered with the maximum qualification and over 21% showed that they gave a qualification of Good to this question.

A set of four questions allowed the students to appreciate the most important personal factors, family factors, social factors and factors that have an influence on the development of entrepreneurial skills. For each of these questions, students could choose several answer options, the results obtained being the following:

➤ **family factors.** Family discipline is the most valued family factor, followed by *encouragement and moral support, family support and education received from parents*;

➤ **the personal factors** most valued by students are *consistency and self-confidence* with an equal number of answers, in second place being *planning and facing responsibilities*;

➤ **the social factors** valued by students as being important in the development of entrepreneurial skills are related to education, in the first place being *education in higher education* followed by *education in pre-university education*. It is surprising that *social need, local and national culture and media coverage of entrepreneurship* have the same number of responses;

➤ The most important of the **economic factors** is the *access to business financing sources* and the following factors valued by the students are: *the level of well-being and/or poverty, the unemployment rate and the inflation rate*.

Consequently, the results of this questionnaire allow teachers to analyse the results of this questionnaire in discussions with students and representatives of the business environment in order to be able to conclude on how the projects, extracurricular activities or the subject matter in the course sheets should be adapted in order to amplify their effect on the development of students' entrepreneurial skills.

4. Conclusions

The strategic objective of the universities, namely that of training competent specialists in the fields studied, is complemented by their orientation towards an entrepreneurial education. By creating a holistic framework, universities can create an integrated education system in which to implement interdisciplinary and extracurricular methods that allow the development of students' entrepreneurial skills.

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