

SECCIÓN ESPECIAL: Emprendimiento

Entrepreneurship: Introduction

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Many investigators from diverse perspectives focus their studies on the area of entrepreneurship due to its important role as an engine of economic and social development. The aim of this monograph is to provide an overview of the state of entrepreneurship research. It presents the controversy about the domain of the study and whether entrepreneurship can be considered a legitimate field of knowledge. We study the aspects that differentiate people who are entrepreneurs from those who are not from the perspective of cognitive psychology and we discuss the role of entrepreneurial education. The work is also an attempt to understand the factors that determine the durability of a company such as resources, location, personality traits, strategies, organizational systems, etc. Lastly, we examine the reality of entrepreneurship research in Spain.

Emprendimiento: introducción. El área del emprendimiento está siendo el centro de estudio de diversos investigadores provenientes de diferentes perspectivas debido a su importante papel como motor de desarrollo económico y social. El objetivo de este monográfico es ofrecer una visión global del estado de la investigación sobre emprendimiento. Se plantea la controversia existente sobre el dominio de estudio del emprendimiento y sobre si puede considerarse un campo de conocimiento legítimo. Se pretenden comprender aquellos aspectos que marcan la diferencia entre personas que son emprendedoras y aquellas que no lo son desde la perspectiva de la psicología cognitiva y se analiza el papel de la educación en el contexto del emprendimiento. También se busca conocer los factores que determinan la durabilidad de una empresa, como los recursos, localización, rasgos de personalidad, estrategias, sistemas organizacionales, etc. Finalmente, se analiza la realidad de la investigación emprendedora en España.

The role of entrepreneurship in society has changed drastically in the last quarter century, to the point that, in recent years, entrepreneurship has been viewed as the engine of economic and social development (Acs & Audretsch, 2001). As Lazear (2002, p. 1) puts it, «the entrepreneur is the single most important player in a modern economy».

Research into entrepreneurship has also changed significantly. Today, entrepreneurship and the impact of entrepreneurship on society are the focus of a growing body of research, mainly from the disciplines of economics, psychology and sociology.

This situation led Low and MacMillan (1988) to label Entrepreneurship research as an eclectic field, since many of these studies were conducted by academics from different disciplines. This inclines us to consider whether research into entrepreneurship will remain contained within traditional disciplines, and if not, how the field of knowledge of entrepreneurship can be created. This and other issues have been reviewed by Davidson, Low and Wright (2001), in the special issue of Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice. The field of entrepreneurship in this century is a catchall (Acs & Audretsch, 2005) that includes a whole variety of topics, not all of which can be included under the umbrella of entrepreneurship.

One thing seems clear: there is tension between those who would like to see entrepreneurship develop as a field of knowledge in its own right, and those who think that it should be addressed from a wider network of disciplines and thus should not be raised to the status of a separate discipline. Perhaps, in an attempt to conciliate these two positions, the first question we should ask ourselves is

whether we can really find a body of knowledge that allows it to be differentiated from other disciplines. Of course this leads to the question: what distinguishes the field of Entrepreneurship?

This special issue is a start in answering this question. Sánchez (in this issue) offer a review of the major perspectives (economic, psychological and sociological) from which the subject of entrepreneurship has mainly been addressed. The analysis provides a model for integrating these perspectives under the umbrella of «entrepreneurial opportunity».

Entrepreneurs discover or identify opportunities, or create and exploit them to add value to society. This model is rooted in a new concept of entrepreneurship that goes beyond these perspectives. Entrepreneurship is regarded as *the study of the processes of identifying, evaluating, developing and exploiting opportunities, as well as of the resources and conditioners that influence these processes*.

The study of these processes is addressed from a cognitive perspective, because, all things considered, entrepreneurs create companies and entrepreneurs are people, bringing entrepreneurial cognition to the heart of the enterprise (Brännback & Carsrud, 2009).

Sánchez, Carballo and Gutiérrez (this issue) summarize the literature on entrepreneurial cognition in two main areas: cognitive structures and cognitive processes. Cognitive structures contain knowledge and cognitive processes the way in which events are processed, stored and used. The study of the structures and processes is intended to answer, among other things, the question of whether entrepreneurs think and process information differently from non-entrepreneurs, and whether such differences will predict those who can start a business.

Among the cognitive aspects most studied in the literature we can highlight: self-efficacy, scripts, styles and cognitive heuristics. Each of these topics is explained in this paper in order to better understand cognition in the entrepreneurial process.

However, there are other topics that are also considered in the literature, although to a lesser extent, and that for reasons of space have not been detailed here. Among others, we should mention cognitive maps (Brännback & Carsrud, 2009), motivations (e.g., Carsrud, Brännback, Elfving, & Brandt, 2009) and emotions (Michl, Welp, Spörrle, & Picot, 2009). What is evident in all these works is the interest in understanding the mind of the entrepreneur by analyzing the cognitive elements that entrepreneurs use, consciously or unconsciously, in their daily activities and that will differentiate them from non-entrepreneurs.

No one can deny that one of the main activities of the entrepreneur is to make decisions. Among them, one that seems obvious, but in many cases is not considered in the studies, is the choice of business location. This choice will have important implications for achieving the resources needed to launch the company. This is what Malanova, Brush, and Edelman (in this issue) addresses in their research. Malanova et al., investigate variations in the set of resources (financial, organizational and physical) that can be accessed from firms located at home or from companies situated outside, including incubators, or other established businesses. Is it easier to obtain external financing resources starting as a company located in an office or in a company located in your own home? Where will prospective employees prefer to work? What resources will allow you to locate the business in your own home? The results show that firms located outside the home have greater cognitive and socio-political legitimacy, which makes it easier to obtain external resources. However, to a greater or lesser extent,

firms located at home often have a series of physical and financial pre-existing resources. Without doubt, this work opens the door to the study of the importance of the business location.

After deciding to start a business and having gone through a complicated decision-making process (including the choice of factors such as location), we might consider which conditions determine the sustainability, growth or stability of the company. Korunka, Kessler, Frank and Lueger (in this issue) investigate the conditions necessary to produce the growth of one-person start-ups. Such businesses represent a subset which joins the traditional official classification of micro, small, medium and large companies and are distinguished by certain characteristics related to the environment, business, persons and development.

One-person businesses (OPBs) are a form of alternative employment that is booming in European Union countries and they are particularly relevant for their growth potential. Thus, Korunka et al., (in this issue) using the interdisciplinary model of Gilbert, McDougall and Audretsch (2006), examine how personality traits, resources, strategies, industry and social capital affect growth in the medium and long term in this type of business. Their results highlight the importance of gender factors and capital requirements as determinants of growth in one-person start-ups.

Viewed in synthesis, all these works reveal, explicitly or implicitly, the significance of entrepreneurship, whether at an academic level (its conceptual framework and development as an independent discipline, cognitive orientation) or at a practical one (its importance for the economy of a country, conditions for making a company last, etc.).

To these elements we must add one that we consider of vital significance to education. That is, how to educate and train our youth, our students, in entrepreneurship. Raposo and Do Paço (in this issue) discuss this topic, addressing the following issues: what do we mean when we talk about Entrepreneurship Education? Is Entrepreneurship Education the same as Training for SMEs? What are the differences between Education about enterprise, Education for enterprise and Education in enterprise? Do these educational programs have any impact on entrepreneurial activity? Undoubtedly, formal education contributes to the formation of entrepreneurship, but we must not forget the influence of other actors, such as family and government public policy.

These authors have reviewed the literature in order to answer these questions, to describe the main lines of research in the field of entrepreneurship education and to identify certain issues to be explored in the future. Entrepreneurship education has been launched by universities, but there is still much to do in this respect to instill an entrepreneurial culture.

Finally, Sánchez and Gutiérrez (this issue) attempt to describe the status of entrepreneurship research in Spain. The last article provides a thorough review of Spanish scholarship in the field of entrepreneurship research, including both articles and PhD theses. It is a pioneering work because no other author so far has examined the state of the art in our country.

If, in general, the study of entrepreneurship lies halfway between youth and maturity as a discipline, in the case of Spain, it is closer to youth. Collaborations with researchers from other countries are scarce, studies come mostly from an economic perspective and there are hardly any contributions from sociology or psychology. Another aspect to consider is the scant dissemination of studies on entrepreneurship conducted in Spain, especially at an international level.

With these important observations, we hope that this monograph will contribute to the development of research in the field of entrepreneurship in our country and its dissemination, both nationally and internationally, and serve as a precedent for future collaborations.

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