

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A CAREER CHOICE. THE EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The importance of entrepreneurial career is incontrovertible. Its relevance arises from a wide spectrum of reasons. The most important one is entrepreneurship itself and its vital role in every economy. The aim of this paper is to analyze students' attitudes concerning entrepreneurial career and also to give an overview of main stimulators for starting entrepreneurial career in the perception of students of management courses. This particular group of respondents is exposed to the theory of enterprise management and stimulated by various courses and programs concerning entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behavior.

Key words: entrepreneur, entrepreneurial career, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intentions, new venture

Introduction

The importance of entrepreneurial career is incontrovertible. Its relevance arises from a wide spectrum of reasons. The most important one is entrepreneurship itself and its vital role in every economy.

Creativity and entrepreneurship have been the motivation behind development for a long period of time. Entrepreneurship is one of the most crucial factors of economic development. It is the result of the creation of new enterprises and the creation of jobs within the existing ones [4, 23]. The other thread is related to the fact of the transformation of contemporary societies into knowledge societies and the transition of economic systems from managerial into entrepreneurial systems, as stressed by D. Audretsch and R. Thurik [1]. This particular transformation and transition promote creative and entrepreneurial individuals willing and being able to discover new and better ways of doing business, find business opportunities and contribute to sustainable high quality of life. Many theorists and practitioners view entrepreneurship as the ultimate tool for the achievement of sustainable development and growth [13, 25].

In the light of the above, the aim of this paper is to analyze students' attitudes concerning entrepreneurial career and also to give an overview of main stimulating and motivating factors for starting entrepreneurial career in the perception of students of management courses. This particular group of respondents is exposed to the theory of enterprise management and stimulated by various courses, programs and assignments concerning entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behavior. This seed is boosted by real business life analysis and case studies, enhancing the awareness of the specificity of entrepreneurship.

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The Specificity of Entrepreneurial Career

At the very beginning, it is vital to describe the essence of entrepreneurial career. According to different dictionaries career means "a job or profession that someone does for a long time" or "a period of time spent in a job or profession" [16]. Other sources define career as "an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress" [20], "a job or series of related jobs that you do, especially a profession that you spend a lot of your working life in" [21], "the series of jobs that a person has in a particular area of work, usually involving more responsibility as time passes" [19]. As career is a term covered by human resources management [9], it is appropriate to regard to the management literature definition. According to A. Poczowski [22], "career" is a sequence of attitudes and behaviors of an individual related to their experience at work, or in other words, a professional development of an individual in their lifetime.

Becoming an entrepreneur means being own boss in every sense. Most entrepreneurial careers require investing most of the time into this kind of job resulting in huge impact on an individual's life. J. Gabrielsson and D. Politis [10] propose a definition of a career as "...any social strand of any person's course through life", which stays in line with E. Goffman's [12] approach. This implies that a career does not only include what an individual does in a particular occupation. It rather should be understood in the light of individual's total working life - both past experiences and future preferences. This concept stands in contrast to some past studies in the entrepreneurship domain which are more narrowly focused on the decision to start a new venture and become an entrepreneur [3, 14]. Anyway, starting an entrepreneurial career is synonymous with starting a new venture, so this approach is applied in this paper.

Entrepreneurs start and operate ventures for many different reasons, both extrinsic and intrinsic in nature. Career reasons such as independence, financial success and self-realization have been empirically developed to determine what reasons are associated with entrepreneurial choice [7, 15].

As A. Balciunaitiene, V. Barvydiene and N. Petkeviciute [2] note, career and its perception may have different meanings. For some individuals, it may be the vehicle through which basic economic needs are satisfied. For others, it may assure a sense of social status or worth. A career may also represent individual's dream of life, offering structure, direction, meaning and purpose to individual's daily activities. As one may conceive work as primarily a social activity, to "have a career" implies much more than an exchange of labor for financial return. With socio-economic changes an individual becomes the core in a whole career process. Nowadays, an individual is a manager of their own career as well as their own life.

The reasons entrepreneurs give for starting businesses are of practical, as well as academic, interest. One prominent account suggests that there may be factors that either *pull* individuals toward creating new ventures or *push* them into it [24]. Individuals start new ventures to pursue opportunities that could improve

their conditions and, on the other hand, create new ventures due to lack of alternatives for employment [17].

Based on extensive literature study N.M. Carter et al. [5] identified six categories of reasons that individuals give for starting businesses and consequently starting an entrepreneurial career. The first category, innovation, involves reasons that describe an individual's intention to accomplish something new. The second category, independence, describes an individual's desire for freedom, control, and flexibility in the use of one's time. Recognition describes an individual's intention to have status, approval, and recognition from one's family, friends, and from those in the community. Roles describe an individual's desire to follow family traditions or emulate the example of others. Financial success involves reasons that describe an individual's intention to earn more money and achieve financial security. The last category, self-realization describes reasons involved in pursuing self-directed goals.

Concluding, new businesses are not created by accident. The effort and time involved in starting a business would suggest that entrepreneurial actions are clearly intentional. A number of studies of the new venture creation process described individuals persisting at a variety of activities over a period of months, or years, in order to achieve the creation of a new firm [6]. Identifying the intention to start entrepreneurial career and factors underlying an individual's choice to pursue new venture creation is beneficial, especially given the role of new ventures to economic growth and employment.

Methodology of the Research

The sample amounted to randomly selected 332 students of Faculty of Management of Czestochowa University of Technology, which accounted to 6.9% of the total population of students of the Faculty. 213 of women and 119 men aged 20 - 58 took part in the research (mean age – 23.62, median 22). The respondents were the students of both full- and part-time course of study (250 and 82 respondents respectively). From among the respondents, one person did not answer the question concerning entrepreneurial intentions, whereas 15 people (4.52%) ran their own business activity. These people were, therefore, excluded from the research concerning the identification of entrepreneurial intentions, since the research was directed towards the exploration of the intentions connected with the first business. As a result, the subject of the research were 316 people (N=316), out of whom there were 207 (66%) women and 109 (34%) men. 244 (77%) people were the students of full-time studies and 72 (23%) people – the students of part-time studies. The majority of the respondents (238 people) were the students of the first degree program and their number amounted to 75%.

The survey took place in December 2013 and January 2014. The research tool constructed by the author was the questionnaire. The statements were formulated on the basis of free interviews with the students. On the basis of the

above, there was created the basis of motives used for the identification of the motives of entrepreneurial career and starting a new venture.

With reference to attitudes, the respondents, the respondents gave answers on a five-point Likert scale (1-I strongly disagree, 2-I rather disagree, 3-I neither agree nor disagree (It's difficult to say), 4-I rather agree, 5-I strongly agree). With reference to the motives leading to the start of entrepreneurial career, the respondents were asked to indicate maximum 5 factors. Selected descriptive statistics were used to describe the main characteristics of the sample.

The statistical analyses were performed with the use of PQStat version 1.4.8. It was assumed that probability value at the level of $p < 0.05$ is statistically significant whereas $p < 0.01$ is statistically highly significant.

Results of the Research

The first stage of the research was the identification of the respondents' attitudes with reference to the fact of starting entrepreneurial career. The respondents were asked to express their attitude towards the three statements. The first one was: "*I want to be the only boss for myself*" (*OwnBoss*), the second one: "*I want to be an employer and to manage my employees*" (*Emplyr*), whereas the third one: "*I will start a business venture within 5 years*" (*NV5Yrs*). The detailed distribution of responses is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Attitudes towards starting an entrepreneurial career

	N=316		
	<i>OwnBoss</i>	<i>Emplyr</i>	<i>NV5Yrs</i>
	I strongly disagree	I strongly disagree	I strongly disagree
Frequency	19	15	29
%	6%	5%	9%
	I rather disagree	I rather disagree	I rather disagree
Frequency	27	35	51
%	9%	11%	16%
	It's difficult to say	It's difficult to say	It's difficult to say
Frequency	77	119	167
%	24%	38%	53%
	I rather agree	I rather agree	I rather agree
Frequency	111	91	46
%	35%	29%	15%
	I strongly agree	I strongly agree	I strongly agree
Frequency	82	56	23
%	26%	18%	7%
Total	316	316	316
Total %	100%	100%	100%

For the purpose of the present analysis the cumulated results of negative and positive responses are essential. With reference to the attitude being the evidence of willingness of being one's own boss, as many as 193 respondents (61%) expressed their positive attitude, 46 people (15%) – the negative one,

whereas 77 people (24%) had no opinion. In case of the attitude referring to the willingness of employing and managing the employees, 147 people (47%) confirmed such a feeling, 50 people (16%) did not identify themselves with such an attitude, and 119 people (38%) had no opinion. An essential statement for starting entrepreneurial career is an attitude concerning the start of a business activity in the period of the nearest 5 years. 69 people (22%) confirmed their intentions in this area, 80 people (25%) denied the existence of such intentions, and 167 people (53%) had no opinion. Although the research results clearly show that many people have a problem with responding clearly to the posed statements, it is visible that the people questioned aim at starting an entrepreneurial career. Particularly important is the result referring to the willingness *to be own boss*, in the case of which there are definitely positive answers. The responses to all the questions and strongly correlated to each other, which is confirmed by Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients ($p < 0.000001$).

In the second part of the research, there were identified the factors motivating the people under research to start entrepreneurial career (Entrepreneurial Career Motivating Factor - ECMF), and consequently, to start running a business activity. The detailed data concerning the frequency of indications are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Motivating factors for realization of entrepreneurial career (N=316)

Order of importance	ECMF ID	Motive - ECMF	Frequency	%
1.	c	<i>Earnings enabling decent life</i>	246	78%
2.	i	<i>Willingness to maintain a family</i>	190	60%
3.	a	<i>Guaranteed employment in one's own company</i>	175	55%
4.	h	<i>Fulfillment of dreams</i>	148	47%
5.	f	<i>Opportunity of self-development and satisfaction</i>	143	45%
6.	g	<i>Being one's own boss</i>	133	42%
7.	d	<i>Opportunity to use one's own skills/capabilities</i>	122	39%
8.	k	<i>Sense of freedom</i>	117	37%
9.	r	<i>Opportunity to improve one's social status and prestige</i>	107	34%
10.	u	<i>Opportunity to create workplaces for others</i>	79	25%
11.	t	<i>Aiming at one's own pleasure</i>	78	25%
12.	p	<i>Opportunity to use knowledge gained in a course of studies in practice</i>	71	22%
13.	l	<i>Looking for challenges for oneself</i>	63	20%

14.	e	<i>Existence of programs and initiatives supporting potential entrepreneurs</i>	46	15%
15.	o	<i>Opportunity to invest the accumulated savings</i>	46	15%
16.	b	<i>Possibility to use market opportunities</i>	38	12%
17.	m	<i>Opportunity to use favorable conditions of the environment</i>	38	12%
18.	n	<i>Fondness of risk</i>	31	10%
19.	s	<i>Following the role model (the person I admire)</i>	28	9%
20.	j	<i>Willingness to continue a family business tradition</i>	18	6%
21.	w	<i>Others</i>	3	1%

The analysis of the results clearly indicates that the respondents are directed by 'tough' financial incentives resulting from aiming at maintaining both the family and the 'dignified' standard of living. Earnings allowing for such a life were indicated as the main motive by 246 people, which amounts to as much as 78% of the respondents. The willingness to maintain the family and aiming at the stability of employment was indicated respectively by 60% and 55% of those questioned.

Being one's own boss was pointed out by 42% of the respondents, in spite of the fact that a positive attitude towards such a situation was declared by 61% those questioned. The opportunity of being one's own boss itself belongs to the top motives leading to the start of entrepreneurial career (6th).

An interesting fact is that a small number of indications refers to the motives resulting directly from entrepreneurial attitudes and entrepreneurial orientation. Looking for challenges took the 13th position, the possibility of using market opportunities – the 16th one, whereas the opportunity to exploit favorable conditions of the environment, going hand in hand with market opportunities, occupied the 17th position. The fondness of risk itself is indicated as the main motivator for the career of the entrepreneur by 10% of the respondents.

'Soft' motivating factors belong to the ones slightly less frequently indicated. Fulfillment of dreams, the opportunity of self-development and own satisfaction occupied the 4th and 5th position, and the sense of freedom, taking the 8th position, was pointed out by 37% of those questioned. The 9th one was occupied by the opportunity to improve one's own social status and prestige (34% of the respondents).

The most rarely indicated motives include following the role model, the admired person (9% of the respondents) and the continuation of the family business tradition (6% of the respondents).

In the framework of the research, an attempt was made to find out the predictors of the attitude being the evidence of aiming at the start of a business

activity within the nearest 5 years. Therefore, there was conducted multiple linear regression analysis and comparison of models. The model, which allows to explain the dependent variable best, was searched for. First, a full model (with a greater number of variables) was constructed and then the reduced models (with a smaller number of variables – such models are created from the full model by removing those variables; the removed variable is the one which, from the statistical point of view, contributes the least information to the current model). The last model contains only one independent variable. As a result, each model is described with the help of adequacy measures (adjusted R^2 , SE), and the subsequent (neighboring) models are compared by means of the F-test. The model which is finally marked as statistically adequate is the model with the greatest adjusted R^2 and the smallest SE ($SE=0.750473$; $R=0.649716$; $R^2=0.422131$; Adjusted $R^2=0.416575$; $F=4.686563$; $p\text{-value}=0.03116$). The results of the regression analysis for the most adequate model are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis model

	β	β standard error	t	p-value
intercept			4.025032	0.000072
<i>OwnBoss</i>	0.276473	0.056383	4.90348	0.000002
<i>Emplyr</i>	0.423466	0.056502	7.494765	<0.000001
<i>Sense of freedom</i>	0.090898	0.043156	2.106292	0.035977

Conducting multiple regression analysis allowed for specifying the dependencies between the attitudes and the motivating factors, stated by the respondents, and the attitude concerning setting up a business activity within the nearest five years. In the selected model, R coefficient indicates a strong dependency between the dependent variable (NV5Yrs) and the vector of independent variables (*OwnBoss*, *Emplyr* and a motivating factor of entrepreneurial career in the form of the sense of freedom). Multiple determination coefficient R^2 equals 0.42, which means that 42% of the variability of the dependent variable may be explained by independent variables, introduced into the model. In case of all the variables in the model, it is possible to identify a statistically significant ($p<0.05$) positive relationship. On the basis of the conducted analysis, it is possible to predict that entrepreneurial career by starting a new venture will be initiated by the people who want to be their own boss, they want to be employers, and among the factors motivating them for implementing self-employment, there is a sense of freedom. The first two predictors do not arouse emotions. However, identifying the influence of this particular motivating factor encourages reflection that, on the one hand, these are the finances, and on the other, such a soft factor as a sense of freedom, by means of running one's own business, encourage to self-employment. It is worth stating, though, that these factors are strictly connected with each other, since financial independence, opportunity to provide a decent life for oneself and

family members, definitely give the sense of freedom. The thread of freedom also refers to the source study devoted to entrepreneurship since in "*The Enterprising Man*" by Collins and Moore [8], the 'desire for independence,' was put at the core of entrepreneurship.

Summary

The conducted research unambiguously allowed for the emergence of tendencies concerning the group of students under research. The most frequently indicated factors motivating for the implementation of self-employment and taking up entrepreneurial career belong to the group of typically financial factors and refer to the permanent (certain) provision of the desired standard of living. An interesting result is the conclusion that entrepreneurial career will most probably be started by the people who wish to be their own boss, who want to be employers, and among the factors motivating them to start self-employment there is a sense of freedom.

The research was carried out on a random sample of students of one faculty, which does not allow to generalize the results with reference to the entire population. However, the results of the conducted research may be a guideline for all the organizations and people whose aim is to stimulate entrepreneurship and to encourage to self-realization in the process of self-employment, since there appear some characteristics of an individual requiring stimulation and the factors whose existence or perception itself may bring about intensive aiming at the creation of new ventures.

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PRZEDSIĘBIORCZOŚĆ JAKO WYBÓR KARIERY. PERSPEKTYWA EMPIRYCZNA

Streszczenie: Znaczenie kariery przedsiębiorcy jest niezaprzeczalne. Jej znaczenie wynika z szerokiego spektrum przyczyn. Najważniejszą z nich jest sama przedsiębiorczość i jej istotna rola w każdej gospodarce. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza postaw studentów dotyczących kariery przedsiębiorcy, a także dokonanie przeglądu głównych stymulatorów do rozpoczęcia kariery przedsiębiorcy w postrzeganiu studentów kursów zarządzania. Ta szczególna grupa respondentów ma styczność z teorią zarządzania przedsiębiorstwem i jest stymulowana przez różnego rodzaju kursy i programy w zakresie przedsiębiorczości i przedsiębiorczych zachowań.

Słowa kluczowe: przedsiębiorca, kariera przedsiębiorcy, przedsiębiorczość, intencje przedsiębiorcze, nowe przedsięwzięcie

作为一个职业选择的创业精神。实证的角度来看

摘要：创业生涯的重要性是不容置疑的。其相关性的产生广泛的原因。最重要的一个是创业本身和在每个经济体中的发挥关键作用。本文件的目的是要分析关于创业生涯的学生的态度，并给的主要刺激器概述在管理课程的学生们的悟性开始创业生涯。此特定组的受访者是接触到的企业管理理论和刺激的各种课程和关于企业家精神与创业行为的程序。

关键词：企业家、创业生涯、创业精神、创业的意图、新合资企业