

Entrepreneurial Competences Development of University Students in the Czech Republic

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities represent driving force of developed economies from national economic point of view. From individual point of view of each entrepreneur, it mainly represents possibilities of applying and developing potential innovative business ideas and ensuring independent and freer future existence of individuals. Small and medium-sized enterprises form a significant part of the economy in developed economies and are characterized by many positives in the current turbulent world. Also, for these reasons, European Union support the development of entrepreneurial activities and the development of entrepreneurship appears as an important topic in the educational environment as well. Today, there are already identified approaches to the development of entrepreneurship at the European level, which enable the effective development of relevant entrepreneurship competence, especially in primary and secondary education level. Entrepreneurship Competence Framework - EntreComp, is interconnected with other frameworks for the development of wide range of competences among pupils. From theoretical point of view, pull and push factors can be identified to support entrepreneurship among future entrepreneurs, which motivate future entrepreneurs to enter business. In our paper, we focus on identification of the situation in implementation of entrepreneurship support in the Czech Republic in the broader concept of education policy, with subsequent focus on possibilities of developing entrepreneurship among university students in Brno. We analyse the motivation of students for entering a university course focused on the development of practical competences leading to the possibility of active action in the role of entrepreneur. We connect the results of the analysis with the theoretical approach to the development of entrepreneurship and with the approaches of the official education policy in the Czech Republic. We hope that this will confirm the correctness of our approach to the development of entrepreneurship competence and support the development of other activities in this area.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship competence, Motivation for entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises play a significant role in the creation of employment and gross domestic product in developed economies. They are perceived as a stabilizing element of the economy because they are characterized by higher flexibility, ability to adapt to sudden changes in the economy, ability to respond to changes in the purchasing behaviour of consumers, and ability to fill gaps in the market. At the same time, they represent the potential of applying entrepreneurial ambitions among the younger generation together with another form of applying entrepreneurial ambitions through self-employment or trade.

If we deal with the issue of young entrepreneurs and possibilities of their entry into business, this issue is linked to area of motivation. Motivation can be defined as impulse to perform a certain activity. Usually, motivation is associated with achieving certain goal and is therefore purpose-oriented towards meaningful activity. Motivation therefore influences human behaviour and its regulation, organization, and stimulation to activity (Marinič et al., 2014). Motivation as stimulation to activity can take two forms, which depends on origin of source of the motivation. First form is effort to use external opportunities as source of motivation according to the pull theory. Second form is effort to avoid internal usually negatively perceived phenomena as source of motivation according to the push theory. We can also distinguish two types of entrepreneurs, opportunity entrepreneurs connected with the pull theory and necessity entrepreneurs connected with the push theory (Humbert & Drew, 2010).

Pull theory assumes that individuals are motivated by attractive incentives that as opportunity entrepreneurs can identify in business environment. Usually, this type of motivation affects opportunity entrepreneurs with more significant results and for longer time. Such attractive incentives include possibility of use one's own talent, innovative approach, and identification of interesting business opportunity or gap in the market (Giacomin et al., 2023). Push theory assumes that individuals as necessity entrepreneurs feel tension between current situation and situation in which they would like to be. Usually, this type of motivation affects necessity entrepreneurs more intense but for shorter time. Negatively perceived working conditions, low evaluation of provided work performance, underappreciation of working abilities, and threat of dismissal or unemployment can be identified as the tensions necessity entrepreneurs feels (Amid & Muller, 1995). At the same time, previous research shows that opportunity entrepreneurs are more successful, achieve higher profits and

contribute more to economic growth, innovation, and job creation (Reynolds et al., 2002). On the other hand, necessity entrepreneurs are older, less educated, have less experience, and are worse at predicting the future (Robichaud et al., 2010).

We can therefore state that for development of entrepreneurship competence among young generation we should focus on attractive incentives as motivation according to the pull theory to form young individuals as opportunity entrepreneurs. Thus, *the main goal of the paper is to analyse motivation of university students to attend the course aimed at development of entrepreneurship competence according to pull and push theory of entrepreneurship motivation.* At the beginning we analyse the curricular documents focused on development of entrepreneurship competence to recognize approach to the topic at primary and secondary education level in the European Union and the Czech Republic. We would like to point out continuity of the approach to the topic at all levels of education system in the Czech Republic, its link to European documents, and emphasis on attractive incentives according to the pull theory of motivation as basic approach to entrepreneurship competence development.

2. Methodological Approach

We searched for relevant curricular documents at the European level and in the Czech Republic that focus on entrepreneurship competence development and analysed approach contained in these documents according to push and pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation. We analysed 112 questionnaires used for entry to the course implemented at the Mendel University in Brno between 2019 and 2022 to identify university students' motivation to enrol in the course aimed to develop entrepreneurship competence. The questions "*What motivates you to enrol in the course?*" and "*What do you expect from the course?*" were part of the questionnaire. Qualitative approach was used for the analysis of the obtained data due to open nature of these questions and freely formulated answers.

3. Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Competence in the Curricular Documents

Entrepreneurship and its development are considered important by the European Union. It is necessary to develop entrepreneurship and appropriate entrepreneurship competence already at young age of individuals so they can widely use entrepreneurship competence not only in the field of business but also in their future life in general. The European Union therefore developed frameworks as certain form of unification of education in the individual member states to ensure greater comparability of initial conditions in education for the young population.

Key competences for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2019) were formulated because education is currently understood as never-ending process. This document is also used as suitable framework for developing key competences at all levels of the education system. The individuals will then use obtained competences not only during their further educational journey, but also in working and personal life throughout whole their lifetime. The competence focused on entrepreneurship is also included among the key competences. As key competence, entrepreneurship competence is defined as ability to act on opportunities and ideas and transform them into values for others. This competence is based on development of creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, development of ability to take initiative and cooperate in implementation of plans and projects that have cultural, social, and financial value.

In the area of knowledge, it is mainly about understanding that there are different circumstances and opportunities for fulfilment of ideas and activities leading to realization of projects; understanding that there are different resources and processes for each project to achieve them. Knowledge within the entrepreneurship competence also relates to ethical issues and sustainability, to ability to identify strengths and weaknesses. In the area of skills, it involves development of creativity, imagination, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It also involves innovative approach and strategic thinking, ability of individual and cooperative activity, and sustainable use of available resources. Integral part of the skills are economic skills to assess financial impact of individuals' decisions and understanding connection between financial side of and risk associated with the decisions. In the area of attitudes, entrepreneurship competence refers to the development of proactive approach to life, ability to take initiative and courage to achieve goals, motivating others while maintaining empathy, and responsibility in ethical matters (European Commission, 2019).

The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework – EntreComp (Bacigalupo et al., 2016) provides concretization of the approach to entrepreneurship competence development. The framework is built on the approach of bridging education and practical working environment. Its implementation is not intended to be strict and

precise but rather inspirational; to encourage active incorporation into national education frameworks and usage by individual schools or teachers. The framework defines entrepreneurship as activity based on opportunities and ideas with aim of transforming them into value for others in financial, cultural, or social form. Entrepreneurship can take many forms, including intrapreneurship, social entrepreneurship, green entrepreneurship, or digital entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship competence applies to wide range of areas in individuals' lives and enables them to develop their personalities, contribute to society development, jobs creation or self-employment, establishment of start-ups or scale-up ventures (Bacigalupo et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurship competence is also directly mentioned among key competences in current framework education programmes in the Czech Republic for primary and lower-secondary education (ISCED 1 & ISCED 2). Specifically, the competence includes orientation in basic activities needed to carry out business plan and its implementation, understanding the essence of goals and risks of business, and developing one's entrepreneurial thinking. The key competences also include problem-solving skills and critical thinking or abilities for cooperation and valuation involvement of others like the European framework. Among other competences they contain also civic competence including topics of ecological and environmental problems and sustainable development or digital competence including safe use of digital technologies. Newly prepared framework education programme in the Czech Republic refers directly to entrepreneurship competence as ability of individual to develop ideas, opportunities and challenges, and create new values in social, cultural, environmental, and economic context, as well as values associated with personal development. These skills also lead to successful coping with changes, uncertainty, eventual failure in various areas of life, and support adaptability. Pupils' practical experience in planning and implementing activities or projects are priority. Similarly, the entrepreneurship competence is directly listed among the key competences also for upper-secondary general education (ISCED 3). For the upper-secondary vocational education and training (ISCED 3) also vocational competences are included in the framework education programmes. Chosen areas of entrepreneurship competence are included among the vocational competences specified as ability to optimally use one's personal and professional prerequisites for successful usability in the world of work, building and developing one's own professional career, and related need for lifelong learning.

Comparison of characteristics of the European and the Czech competence frameworks indicates significant similarity in arrangement of competences, their definitions, as well as delineation of their components. Increase in the similarity over time can be seen due to ongoing revisions of framework education programmes in the Czech Republic. Even though the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework should be inspirational, its parts are transcript into Czech curricular documents verbatim. Skills and abilities with positive connotation, i.e. those that relate to pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation, are significantly dominant among components of entrepreneurship competence. This can thus be considered appropriate, because motivation forming opportunity entrepreneurs have a longer-term effect and more positive impact on individuals and society.

4. Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Competence Among University Students in Brno

The next part of the paper presents the results of the analysis of entrepreneurship motivation among 112 university students at Mendel University in Brno who decided to enrol in course of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence development from 2019 till 2022. Presented results follow and enrich findings of previous research conducted on the same research sample (Adamec & Hrmo, 2023). In current paper we used other students' statements to be able to connect information from enrolment questionnaire with the pull and push theory of entrepreneurship motivation. We briefly present the South Moravian Region and the city of Brno as centre of support and development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence.

4.1 Entrepreneurship Development in South Moravian Region and Brno

Brno is the second largest city in the Czech Republic and the centre of the South Moravian Region. The city is important centre of higher education with almost 65,000 university students in a wide range of fields of technical, natural, and social sciences. In the field of business support, the South Moravian Innovation Centre (abbreviated as JIC in Czech language) is an important institution which focuses on the support of commercial use of research and development of universities located in Brno, mediates the connection of universities and scientific research institutions with the business sphere, helps innovative companies, students with original ideas, researchers, and inventors. Brno as region supporting the development of entrepreneurial activities and entrepreneurship competence received the European Entrepreneurship Region Award, based on developing

tailored activities supporting entrepreneurs across the entire funnel, from students and pre-entrepreneurs to start-ups, scale-ups, and global champions ("Famalicão...", 2023).

There are several options for supporting the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence among university students within the three largest universities in Brno (Masaryk University, Brno University of Technology, Mendel University in Brno). Courses are available for students at these universities to develop entrepreneurship, either in the form of entrepreneurship competences development, or through the support of practically oriented knowledge, skills, and abilities for active business. These universities also have contests between students to identify and support interesting student business ideas.

4.2 Evaluation of Feedback From University Students of Entrepreneurship Course

At the Mendel University in Brno, the "START-UP Mendel" course is one of the activities aimed at development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence among enrolled students. The course is voluntary and is not part of any study program or required for finishing any study of the students at the university. Data for analysis were obtained through the enrolment questionnaire which students were supposed to fulfil to be enrol in the course. As part of enrolling process students answer the question: "*What motivates you to enrol in the course?*" and "*What do you expect from the course?*". These seemingly simple questions indicate not only their motivation for the course but also for entrepreneurship itself. The answers then show students' internal readiness and motivation for entrepreneurship and its multi-layered nature due to wide range of motives.

We obtained data from 52 students in the academic year 2019/2020, from 30 students in the next year, and from 20 students in the year 2021/2022. According to our data 38 students (73% of enrolled students) in the academic year 2019/2020 had prior business idea, the year later 15 students (50% of enrolled students), and in 2021/2020 only 8 students (40% of enrolled students) had prior business idea. The data indicate decrease in number of enrolled students and students with a priori business idea before enrolling in course. We also identify changes in number of students already in team before enrolment in course. Twelve students created teams before enrolment in 2019/2020, in 2020/2021 it was only 2 students, and in 2021/2022 students created team in 6 cases. In first two years students in teams also had business idea already before enrolment in course, but only one pair in 2021/2022 had such idea. Other 4 students in 2021/2022 wanted to work in teams but had no business idea. Changes in interest and motives of students during the time indicated by the data can be seen as decrease of interest in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence development through the course, but it could be caused also by the pandemic situation after 2020.

As supposed, motives of students are mostly based on interest in entrepreneurship and practical side of doing business. However, there are also students whose interest in courses can be characterized as purely pragmatic at any university. In the university environment it is understandable because their motivation lies in the fulfilment of study obligations. This pragmatic motive we can see in the student's statement:

"...motivation for me is two beautiful ECTS credits that I can get by finishing this course, because as I already know every credit is useful and counts."

We also supposed that the motivation of students would be in attractive incentives according to the pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation. But we were able to identify also statements associated with previous negative experiences in the role of employee or effort to avoid negatively perceived role as employee in the future. These external influences connected with the push theory of entrepreneurship motivation as necessity entrepreneurs are illustrated by students' statements:

"...going to temporary jobs, where I work according to instructions and where I invest my time and energy to satisfy predominantly financial expectations of owners, is meaningless to me. In addition, contractual employment relationships are often poorly financially valued."

"...in my several years as a part-time worker for all kinds of companies and individuals, I found out that being employed all my life is really not what I want in the future. If I were in job, I would be afraid that I would be stuck in time, and I wouldn't be able to develop."

"...I don't enjoy the classic model of an employee, as I am very creative and thoughtful, so it is problem for me that even if I do more on part-time job, I still get paid the same. I like to create and build new things. I have the business plan that could help those around me and generate profit for me at the same time. Now I am involved in the global business in which I work with the team of approximately 6 people."

"...I definitely don't want to spend the rest of my productive life in so-called 'rat race'. I want to learn how to turn ideas into sustainable business."

These statements indicate that the students already have lot of experience in developing their own business ideas, and even in international cooperation. The development of wide range of competences and personal development is clearly important for those students. The idea to be employee after graduation does not seem attractive to the students. The issue of the negative concept of the classic role of employee is stressed. Other student also pointed to the failure to meet one's own goals and the low financial evaluation of employees' work related to the push theory of entrepreneurship motivation as necessity entrepreneurs. The last statement simultaneously points to already developed concept of entrepreneurship, as it refers to "rat-race" used by Robert Kiyosaki.

On the other hand, positive influence of previous entrepreneurial experience can be identified in the form of already implemented business and in long-term thinking about business. This positive previous entrepreneurial experience can be seen as positive internal factors according to the pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation as opportunity entrepreneurs. It can be demonstrated by students' statements:

"...I have been interested in entrepreneurship for several years and have (already) launched the first project. However, I would like to expand my knowledge, motivate and possibly share some of my ideas with team of active people."

"...I have been running my own business for about two years now and at the same time I am working on other projects. I also have lot of other ideas for possible business, and I expect possible help with implementation of one of them. At the same time, I expect opportunity to contribute to someone else's ideas."

This indicate that students not only expect additional information for further entrepreneurship competence development, but also expect opportunity to share their previous entrepreneurial experience with others.

Enrolment to the course is associated with the expectation of obtaining decisive motive for realization of the long-intended goals and plans in the field of business. It seems that students may have business plans in their minds for long time, but for various reasons they have not been able to implement them until now. These motives can also be recognized as internal positive factors according to pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation and hopefully can be used for starting active entrepreneurial life of students after the course. This type of motivation can be seen in students' statements:

"...I have been carrying the business ideas in my head for 3 years. I expect this unique opportunity will help me group all my ideas into one concrete and feasible plan and start the business in it. And most importantly, successfully."

"...since I studied at secondary grammar school, I have been thinking of various things that would be good for business. Since then, countless ideas have crossed my mind. Looking back, some of them were unrealizable, but some were great, and often someone came up with the same thing. However, I never had enough courage to take risk and start my own startup. I often did market research, project plan, but as obstacles started to appear, I lost courage even though I believed in my idea. I expect the course to give me courage to start something of my own and I will pursue my goals more confidently and meet new people who are as passionate about entrepreneurship as I am, who will enrich me with their thoughts and approach to business."

This demonstrates active approach to entrepreneurship, but it is limited by various fears, lack of determination and courage.

The development of entrepreneurship through the course can represent the fulfilment of long-term dream for students. Especially with the very positive approach to the entrepreneurship which can be identified as factor of pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation. We can see it in the students' statements:

"...I love entrepreneurship, motivating myself and others, multitasking, innovation, and constant improvement in what I enjoy. I've dreamed of entrepreneurship since I was a child"

"...school period is ideal for acquiring new skills. I have always admired people who have built something, I would also like to build something of my own to realize myself and develop. They say that environment shapes a person, that's why I would like to be in environment where others will think the same way."

"...I didn't even think that it would be possible to learn something about business from the real side while studying. I think it's absolutely great idea."

The enthusiasm shown in statements is combined with certain degree of surprise that entrepreneurship competence can also be developed through practical course during university studies. Students appreciated developing their entrepreneurial skills and abilities connected to entrepreneurial activities, but also the entrepreneurship competence development linked to general personality development. They also point out that this approach will give them advantage compared to other students who do not use such opportunity. They draw attention to the fact that it is environment that has significant influence on complex formation of person and the university should be such environment forming person appropriately and comprehensively.

We also identified the influence of the wider environment on motivation to develop entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence among students. South Moravian Region and the city of Brno really seems to be suitable environment that contributes to the positive motivation of students to become entrepreneurs. Students perceive very positively cooperation of the South Moravian Innovation Centre (JIC) in this course and the involvement of experts from the centre to teaching activities. This can be seen in students' statements:

"...this course interested me due to connection with JIC. I have been following this organization for long time and I am determined to establish cooperation. I was often messing around with the idea of my own project/business. However, more thoughts and ideas run through my head, and I don't know how to decide. However, I would very much like to expand my horizons with managerial skills and try to refine my philosophy for my future business."

"...I heard about JIC for the first time during my work at the marketing agency with which they cooperated at the time. I like the idea of the centre that guides students in important direction and toward meaningful activities. I like comprehensive and modern approach, and this is also what I expect from the course."

"...in 2020/2021 I participated in online lectures and workshops from JIC, and it was absolutely great. That's why I would like to move forward in some real project with other students."

The analysis of students' motivation to develop entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence through the university course shows specific examples of motives that are directly related to the pull and push theory of entrepreneurship motivation. As expected, the data points to dominant influence of positive internal factors according to pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation that increase students' interest in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence development. Among these factors there were positive previous experiences as well as long-term thoughts about entrepreneurship. These also demonstrate positive influence of appropriately designed curriculum at lower levels of education in the Czech Republic, aimed to develop entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence.

5. Discussion

The analysis of university students' motivation to enrol in the course "Start-up Mendel" at Mendel University in Brno points to their previous entrepreneurial experience, or at least interest in entrepreneurship, which can be seen as attractive incentives according to the pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation. In this sense, our current analysis points to the same motivation that has been identified among university students at Masaryk University in previous research (Marinič, et al., 2014; Marinič, 2016; Marinič & Záthurecký, 2016). Although previous research was carried out in the period 2013-2015, when relatively high unemployment rate even among young population in the Czech Republic was recognized, the motives according to pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation were more dominant than motives according to push theory of entrepreneurship motivation. Students with entrepreneurship motivation according to push theory were also identified, although to lesser extent. In other words, students seem to be permanently more motivated by positive image of entrepreneurship, rather than negative concerns about employment or threat of unemployment.

The analysis of the competence frameworks shaping European education policy shows that the entrepreneurship competence is perceived as important part of the education process (European Commission, 2019). The importance of the entrepreneurship competence is also enhanced by its processing in separate framework, even though this framework does not necessarily have to be implemented verbatim, but rather used as summary of recommendations for the effective development of entrepreneurship competence (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). We can also see the interconnection of European competence frameworks and Czech curricular documents. In the national concept, the development of entrepreneurship competence is treated

similarly, and over time the emphasis on the development of entrepreneurship competence is increasing. We can see positive approach to the development of entrepreneurship competence according to the pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation in those documents. Emphasis is placed on comprehensive development of personalities, on proactive approach to entrepreneurship, development of creativity and innovation, with current development of critical thinking and responsibility. Those areas are developed among pupils at primary and secondary level of education and create suitable basis for entrepreneurship competence development among university students as can be seen in motives of analysed university students.

Students who show interest in the entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence development can use wide range of support within university environment. As we pointed out, in the South Moravian Region and in the city of Brno, not only students have significant support for the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence. The region in cooperation with universities creates appropriate conditions for the development of entrepreneurship, but also the possibilities for the realization of specific business ideas of students. The time that students spend at the university correspond to the period of their greatest personality development and it is also the time when students can already develop business activities legally.

6. Conclusion

Entrepreneurship represents important area in persons development and has benefits for society in economic, social, cultural, ecological, and other areas. Therefore, great emphasis is placed on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence development in the European Union. This is reflected in inclusion of entrepreneurship competence between key competences to be developed among pupils and students across education system. Entrepreneurship competence development must be motivated as any other learning process. We can distinguish two approaches to entrepreneurship motivation, according to the pull and push theory. Pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation consists of positive attractive incentives for entrepreneurship. Pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation consist of effort to avoid negatively assessed states and to see entrepreneurship as solution. Entrepreneurship competence in the European frameworks, but also in the Czech curriculum documents, are based on positive approach connected with the pull theory. Students are predominantly positively motivated especially through motives related to pull theory of entrepreneurship motivation according to our current analysis of the university students' motivation for enrolment in the course about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship competence development. They acquire knowledge and skills in business and gain advantage towards other students in their future life. At the same time, they are motivated by possibility of sharing their own experience and sharing experience with experts, which can help them to start of their own real business.

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