

Awakening entrepreneurial emotions and intentions in non-business student courses through trigger events: the special role of teaching methods and teacher authenticity

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Research objectives/questions:

“It is one thing to find that most people choose not to engage in entrepreneurship, it is a very different thing if they don't even consider it as an option” (Kuehn, 2009, p.108). Being in line with the statement by Kuehn, this study sets the focus on investigations why some individuals decide to become an entrepreneur, while others decide not to do so.

Everyone is a potential entrepreneur. However, entrepreneurial action can be inhibited by diverse barriers – intrinsic and extrinsic ones. In this vein, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) embody an important support function in order to overcome specific entrepreneurial barriers or to arousing entrepreneurial aspirations; especially as **students** represent a particularly promising group of potential entrepreneurs. Therefore, the literature on entrepreneurship education (EE) witnessed rapid growth in the past thirty years, including entrepreneurial intention (EI) as the mainly considered learning outcome of EE interventions. As known, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) constitutes the dominating theory for explaining EI, thus serving as theoretical anchor of EE impact studies. However, recent studies point out to the importance of investigating emotions in EE impact studies, as they may increase the explained amount of variances in EI.

Recent studies further highlight the importance of investigating **non-business students** in EE impact studies, as they hold high creative potential, but suffer from a lack of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Consequently, they are *undecided* whether or not entrepreneurship could be a career option for them, or worse, do not even *perceive* entrepreneurship as an option for their career. As a result, even best policies trying to support students in the cases of entrepreneurial behaviour can't be effective if students are not triggered to at least deal with entrepreneurship – they simply do not notice what support could already be there. Therefore, this study takes a step backwards and, thus, deals with the question on how to arouse students' EI and emotions.

Within this investigation, this study has the purpose to broaden our knowledge on further research gaps in EE impact studies: awareness seminars, teacher authenticity, and teaching methods. These variables strive to the recommendations to focussing on the **context** of EE interventions, as it may moderates effects on EI or emotions.

As a summary, this empirical study investigates a variety of research gaps having the purpose to answer the following main research questions:

1. Is it possible to generate significant effects on EI and entrepreneurial emotions through an awareness seminar (lasting approx. three hours)? Which teaching method works (better)? Do entrepreneurial emotions have a contribution to intention (variation) measurements using the TPB?
2. Does teacher authenticity moderate the effects from EE interventions on entrepreneurial emotions and intentions? Do we overestimate the importance of the teaching method? Or does a specific teaching method tend to generate higher teacher authenticity?
3. How do results differ according to the student group? Do specific teaching methods suit better to business or non-business students?

Conceptual Development:

Entrepreneurship, psychology and pedagogy – the disciplinary entanglement of EE portrays an important condition for researchers in this field.

Talking about the *psychological influence* in EE, researchers mainly make use of the TPB regardless of the disciplinary background of students, making it to the central psychological theory in EE research. However, recent criticism coming from several authors strive to taking entrepreneurial emotions as part of the EE impact evaluation into account, having the purpose to broaden and deepen understanding the association between emotions and the known antecedents of EI. Alongside with this association, entrepreneurial emotions can make behavioural predictions more precise, making this stream of research appear promising.

Affect infusion model constitutes the theoretical anchor of this study, consisting of affect-as-information theory and concept priming. The **affect-as-information theory** is defined as the “process whereby affectively loaded information exerts an influence on and becomes incorporated into the judgmental process, entering into the judge's deliberations and eventually coloring the judgmental outcome” (Forgas, 1995, p. 39). **Concept-priming** assumes that current emotions serve as the basis for judgment processes because they prime emotion-congruent memories – the more positive these emotions are, the more positive the evaluation is. According to an own literature review on emotions in EE impact studies, findings about the relationship of the affect infusion model and the TPB are scarce.

Regarding the *pedagogical influence* in EE, researchers still criticize the lacking linkage of EE with pedagogical theories. Up to now, especially the **teaching model framework** by Béchar and Grégoire (2005) can serve as a pedagogical basis for classifying EE interventions – also in this empirical study. In this vein, the current debate deals with approaches in order to generate superior learning outcomes (affective, cognitive and skill-based) of EE interventions, considering the quite common recognition but still missing evidence regarding superior learning outcomes of experiential in contrast to traditional EE.

Apart from that, researchers argue to deepen research on other contextual factors (besides teaching methods) possibly affecting the learning outcomes of pedagogical interventions. One **contextual factor** portrays the student group. In this context, only few methodologically rigorous studies focused on non-business students. Moreover, comparing the outcome of the same EE intervention between non-business and business students constitutes a research gap. Another contextual factor is the duration of EE interventions. In this context, it remains under-researched if the emergence of specific learning outcomes is also possible in EE trigger events, whose investigation is recommended by researchers. Such trigger events, simultaneously called awareness seminars, try to increase the attraction towards entrepreneurship. Their focus thus targets **affective** (in this study represented by “entrepreneurial emotions”) instead of skill-based learning outcomes, since the time frame is too short for generating skills. In this context, it seems obvious that awakening emotions is easier to reach with the help of an **authentic teacher** (e.g., an entrepreneur), portraying a role model serving as a facilitator. This approach strives to the constructivistic model, assuming that knowledge evolves and only needs a trigger event.

Methodology:

This empirical study uses a quasi-experimental design having control groups for each business and non-business student courses as well as ex-ante and ex-post surveys following recent recommendations. In this vein, all EE interventions have been held by one lecturer (working as an entrepreneur) using two different methodological approaches: traditional and experiential teaching. The study has the purpose to explore affective learning outcomes of EE interventions within different contexts in order to find superior teaching approaches for pre-

defined groups. Those learning outcomes subsume entrepreneurial emotions and EI. The former include the variables ‘positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS)’, ‘inspiration’, and ‘pride’.

Results:

The sample size of this study consists of 635 valid surveys. With regard to the research questions formulated above, findings of the empirical study provide us with the following answers:

1. Using independent samples t-test, awareness seminars show an effect on ‘negative emotions towards entrepreneurship’: the mean reduces from 2.88 to 2.28 (highly significant). Positive emotions and EI remained stable, whereas Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), one antecedent of the TPB, increased significantly. In this vein, the teaching method had no moderating effects. Regarding the emotion-intention relationship, PANAS, pride and inspiration portrayed explanatory variables within a regression analysis, increasing the amount of explained variance in EI. The emotion-intention relationship is not mediated by TPB’s antecedents.
2. Using independent samples t-test, students evaluated all four factors of teacher authenticity (“live to teach”, “subject-specific focus”, “proximity”, and “no textbook teacher”) at a significantly higher degree within the experiential teaching method in comparison to the traditional one. Apart from that, results of regression analyses show that the strength of perceived teacher authenticity implies positive effects on inspiration, pride, PANAS, all TPB’s antecedents, and EI.
3. The significant effects on negative emotions and PBC mentioned in point one persist even after breaking-up the sample into business and non-business student groups. In this context, the teaching method had no moderating effect.

Contributions:

The major benefit of this study is the theoretical contribution to the TPB portraying the most important theory in EE research. In this vein, this paper formulates a novel proposition that suggests combining the affect infusion model with the TPB. First results focussing on this theoretical connection are promising, as the amount of explained variance in intention increased when adding entrepreneurial emotions in the regression model.

Apart from that, findings show that EE interventions decrease students’ negative emotions and increase their PBC. The valuable results regarding the teaching method and teacher authenticity support researchers advising to increase the amount of experiential teaching in EE interventions and initiate further studies on teaching methods and teacher authenticity in other contexts than EE.

As a practical implication, the empirical findings can support entrepreneurship educators in their decision how to design their classes, trying to maximize the effect of their courses. Apart from that, the findings encourage policy makers to give HEIs incentives to arrange EE awareness seminars in non-business courses, as findings on entrepreneurial emotions and PBC are promising.