Factors Driving Entrepreneurial Orientation among Undergraduate Students in Zimbabwe: Questioning Pedagogical Perspectives and Entrepreneurial Intentions

Mbuyisa, E.[1], Shiri, A.[1] & Chirume, S.[2]

[1] Lecturers, Faculty of Business Sciences, Department of Entrepreneurship; Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

[2] Senior Lecturer and Chairperson, Department of Mathematical Sciences, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Correspondence: Shiri A., Lecturers, Faculty of Business Sciences/Department of Entrepreneurship; Midlands State University, Zimbabwe. E-mail: alphshiri@gmail.com

Received: June 6, 2023 Accepted: September 25, 2023 Online Published: October 23, 2023

doi:10.5430/bmr.v13n1p1 URL: https://doi.org/10.5430/bmr.v13n1p1

Abstract

The paradigm shift in contemporary university curriculum is to produce employment creators rather than job seekers. This study explores the enterprise related entrepreneurship course content that may be ranked as most desirable in developing entrepreneurial intentions among university students. The problem is that the broad and widening focus of entrepreneurship courses offered at most universities appear not to provide an understanding of the specific characteristics that drive entrepreneurial intent among students with different social and economic backgrounds. Therefore, the objective of this study was to test and evaluate subject content items that are most influential in promoting entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students with the intention of recommending a streamlined entrepreneurship curriculum. A 26-item questionnaire was used to collect data from 300 participants in the Faculty of Business Sciences at Midlands State University. A quantitative descriptive analysis of the independent variables was made. Consistent with previous studies examining entrepreneurial intention, we also conducted correlations to check on the direction and strength of the relationships among the variables. A short regression analysis was also run (using SPSS 21) to check whether entrepreneurial intentions could be explained by some variables related to teaching approaches. The study found that opportunity recognition, independence and pitching of business ideas were the top items in the module content that inspired the intention to start an enterprise among undergraduate students. The study adds value to curriculum development by identifying entrepreneurship course content that increases the desire to be independent and shift student's focus from a job seeker to a career and enterprise development orientation.

Keywords: entrepreneurial orientation, undergraduate students, Zimbabwe

1. Problem Statement

This study was motivated by the gaps that were perceived to exist on the entrepreneurial attitude moulding effect of university entrepreneurship education. Despite a lot of literature and research, it still seems unclear on what can or should be involved in entrepreneurial education. The conceptualisation of the underlying mechanisms through which education prepares university students for entrepreneurship is still not clear. Issues arise as to the role played by entrepreneurship education relate to whether it is just creating an awareness or has a moulding effect that re-orients students from a job seeking mentality to an employment creation attitude.

2. Literature Review

The study conducted a review of past studies on the effect of entrepreneurship education on student attitudes and entrepreneurial intent. Empirical studies were reviewed under various sub-headings including the subsequent heading on entrepreneurial intent.

2.1 Entrepreneurial Intent

Entrepreneurial intentions may be conceptualised as a conviction by an individual that they intend to start a business venture in the future. Bell (2019: 821) defines entrepreneurial intent as "a reflection of the state of an individual which prompts them towards taking up self employment rather than being employed". This means that entrepreneurial intent forms an antecedent and important step towards becoming an entrepreneur. Malebana (2012) states that entrepreneurial

intent is a key element in understanding new venture creation. This mirrors the view put forward by Henley (2005) who suggests that entrepreneurial behaviour such as opportunity identification or the quest to become self employed are planned and intentional acts that are best predicted by intentions towards the behaviour. As such entrepreneurial intent may be thought of as the motivational factors that influence individuals to pursue activities related to openingup and running a business.

Insights on entrepreneurial intent may be drawn from Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen,1991). It has been suggested that entrepreneurial intent depends on perceived feasibility, personal capability and perceived attractiveness of the prospect to start a business with propensity to act. On the other hand Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (TBB) focuses on attitudes as the best predictor of intent, that is attitude towards the act, social norms and perceived behavioural control.

Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour is one of the theories that may add to an increased understanding of the role of education on students' entrepreneurial intent. Ajzen (1991) proposes three motivational factors that influence behaviour as follows:

1) Behavioural control (a perception of difficulty in the realisation of the planned behaviour).
2) Attitude in relation to the behaviour (a positive or negative evaluation of the planned behaviour)
3) Perception of societal norms (social pressures towards the planned behaviour)

The perceived preferences, attractiveness of the idea and social norms constitute elements of the theory of planned behaviour that can be measured using an entrepreneurial intent scale.

2.2 The Role of Education

The debate on nature versus nurture controversy in developing entrepreneurial orientation in students raises the question on the ability of entrepreneurship courses to influence entrepreneurial intent among university students. Nabi (2010) suggests that a study on entrepreneurial intent among students should take into consideration that entrepreneurial intention is something that can be nurtured through entrepreneurship education which may foster new attitudes and build confidence in students. Furthermore, Nabi (2010) asserts that enterprise education increases self-efficacy which translates intentions into entrepreneurial behaviour. The inconclusive debate on the role played by education versus the environment under which one is raised in provoking the attitudes and behaviours linked to entrepreneurial intentions necessitates further research on the impact of education. The major question is: what aspects of the current entrepreneurship curriculum offered in most universities in Zimbabwe are most significant in motivating entrepreneurial intentions among university students? While entrepreneurship courses vary and range from the use of case studies to simulations, the development of a business plan is the most common feature of the entrepreneurship curricula in most universities (Honig, 2004). Focus on teaching business planning may have emanated from a business management curriculum that includes strategic planning. Such an approach would equip graduates with organisational skills that optimise business operation should one go ahead to start a business of their own. Despite the dominance of business plan teaching in entrepreneurship courses, there has been very little if any link between what is taught in school and the graduate's entrepreneurial intentions. This may be attributed to the lack of specific relationships between what is taught and entrepreneurial intentions. Armstrong (1982) in Honig (2004) maintains that the pedagogical goals of business planning remain somewhat murky. There is lack of sufficient empirical evidence to link teaching business plans and entrepreneurial orientation. It is therefore surprising to see that there is limited knowledge on graduates' post course entrepreneurial activity given the extent and diffusion of entrepreneurial education. The bulk of studies tested key entrepreneurial characteristics such as attitudes towards risk as a measure of entrepreneurial intent or predictors of entrepreneurial intent. There is therefore a gap on testing the content of the curriculum against entrepreneurial intentions among university students. Thus, the objective of this study was to find out which elements of entrepreneurial education curriculum are most significant in inducing entrepreneurial intent among university students.

2.3 Questioning Entrepreneurial Education Content and Delivery System

University entrepreneurial education is designed to shift individual student mindsets from job-seeker to job-creator mindsets. The dominant pattern of university education is mostly individual student centred (Luukkanen, 2000). The conceptualisation and understanding of the underlying mechanisms by which entrepreneurial education can have a moulding effect, which fosters a new world view and a departure from job seeking to job creating intentions is not clear. Whereas writing a business plan and developing managerial skills are the most common approaches used by universities to encourage entrepreneurship behaviour among students, Lekoko, Rankhumise and Ras (2012) argue that the approach used such as writing a business plan may only create awareness of entrepreneurship as an alternative to employment after graduation without necessarily encouraging entrepreneurial behaviour. Lekoko et al. (2012) state

that research has not adequately addressed the questions on what constitutes the entrepreneurial education motivations that have an impact on entrepreneurial intent. Colette, Hill and Leith (2005) question whether the antecedence to entrepreneurship can be motivated through teaching. This means there could be pull factors such as lack of employment that influence graduates to start businesses rather than being motivated to participate by what is taught in the classroom. Guzma and Linana (2005) as cited in Malebana (2012) propose that different types of education goals and approaches are responsible for different entrepreneurial outcomes as depicted in the figure below.

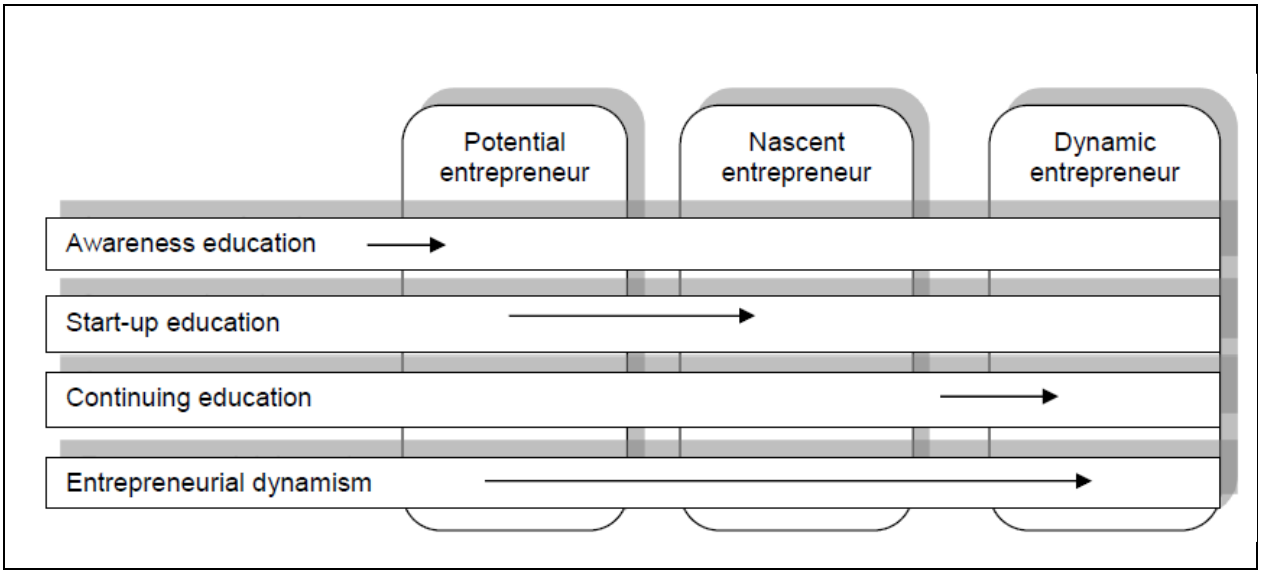

Figure 1. Types of entrepreneurship education and its context, Source: Guzman &Linan (2005) in Malebana (2012)

As displayed in Figure 1, the different contexts in which entrepreneurship is taught demands different approaches to teaching the requisite skills and knowledge. Piperopoulos and Dimov (2015) assert that content and context of the entrepreneurship courses offered make it difficult to generalise the effects of the various teaching approaches on student intention and ability to start a business. From a pedagogical perspective, the methods of teaching entrepreneurship vary extensively such that the term entrepreneurship teaching may not be a homogeneous description of classroom activities. This may require categorization in order for empirical study findings to be generalizable.

2.4 The Role of the Environment Versus Education

Souitas, Zerbinati and Al-Lahman (2007) maintain that biological and inherited characteristics play a significant role in influencing entrepreneurial tendencies among well to do entrepreneurs. This view is supported by Azim and Akbar (2010) who state that the "entrepreneurial spirit" may not be taught, meaning that certain traits that are fundamental to the success of an entrepreneur such as having high levels of energy or being persistent in one's business goals, are personality characteristics that can not be acquired in the classroom. A university professor once echoed that "I can't teach students the personality traits necessary to take risks, but I can teach them to analyse those risks, to be analytical about their choices and to learn from mistakes made in the past" (Farrell in Azim & Akbar, 2010: 23). Therefore one can conclude that aspects of entrepreneurship that can be taught include the skills that result in orientation towards starting an enterprise and not the genetic endowment that results in the energy and persistence found in most successful entrepreneurs.

University education is the training of the mind, to learn to think, to develop those strengths of character we call virtues, to acquire a social formation, and to prepare for life. It is usually classified under tertiary education. Simon (2018) notes that higher tertiary education leads to the award of an academic degree. Higher education, also called post-secondary education, third-level or tertiary education, is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after completion of secondary education. Education in African has been for the longest of time been accused of imitating the European style of education. Cross and Ndofirepi (2017) and Hauser, Howlett, and Matthews (2009) support this by stating that universities in Africa have often been accused of being semblances of western epistemologies propelling an encumbering and debilitating Eurocentric education, characterised by an attendant tenacity to exclude and marginalise an indigenous presence and 'ways of knowing in higher education. This makes its relevance and

effectiveness almost impossible primarily because of its incompatibility with the environment that it is being implemented in.

Garazi and Jose Antonio (2019) points out that the content for the entrepreneurship course should entail entrepreneurship skill development, self-knowledge, personal development leadership, risk taking, communication and negotiation, idea generation and development of intra entrepreneurship or entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship courses should offer business models and customer management. Other knowledge needed are courses such as finance, laws, economics, statistics, customer service and sales and skills related to management skills like leadership, team management and communication. Murinda and Gasva (2013) have topics to be taught to the Post Graduate in Education in the Entrepreneurship module PGED 215 as; Conceptualising Entrepreneurship, Theories of Entrepreneurship.

Focusing on new venture creation, many researchers observe that there is a positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and start-up actions (Chrisman & Vesper, 2001; Henry, 2004; McMullan & Kuratko, 2003; 2005). Many studies have shown that entrepreneurship education affects the career choice of students and facilitates them to start up (Fleming, 1994). Clark et al. (1984) reported that university students who had completed an entrepreneurship course demonstrated a higher level of intention to create a new firm. They observed that 80% of the entrepreneurship students had entrepreneurial intention after studying the course and over 70% of them later on created their own companies.

3. Purpose of Study

This study will therefore collect empirical evidence on the teachable aspects of entrepreneurship and correlate them against entrepreneurial intent. The following objectives were crafted:

To find out which teaching methods are most motivational to university students and may push them towards entrepreneurial intentions.

To find out the effect of different teaching methods on university students' entrepreneurial intent.

4. Methodology

This section describes the research design, participants, sampling technique and data collection procedure used in the study. A 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided or Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree was used to rate students' views. A quantitative descriptive analysis of the independent variables was made. Consistent with previous studies examining entrepreneurial intention, we also conducted correlations to check on the direction and strength of the various relationships among the variables. A short regression analysis was also run (using SPSS 21) to check whether entrepreneurial intentions could be explained by some variables related to teaching approaches based on quantitative data collected from university students.

4.1 Research Design

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study in which the researchers intended to gain an understanding of the effect of different teaching methods on student's entrepreneurial intentions, without manipulating teaching and learning conditions. Cross sectional quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire that was administered to second year first-semester university students at Midlands State University via Whatsapp platform due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

4.2 Participants and Sampling

Researchers adopted a convenience sampling approach for the study in which data was collected from students in the classes that were managed and taught by researchers. Participants of the study were second year students in the Faculty of Business Management. This study's sample (n = 300) consisted of 100 Information Systems students, 50 Retail and Logistics students, 60 Accounting students, and90 Business Studies students, all from the Faculty of Business Management.

4.3 Measures

Measurement items for the study included the following:

Do entrepreneurship stories told in lecturers motivate you?

Have entrepreneurship videos shared in class motivated you to be an entrepreneur?

Does crafting a business plan make you find it easy to start your business?

Does conducting research in entrepreneurship as an assignment make you develop skills for starting your own business?

Does the pitch in class make you feel confident to present in front of any given audience?

Does playing entrepreneurship games online motivate you towards becoming self employed?

Has online learning sharpened your analytical skills necessary to start a thriving business?

Are videos used in online learning motivational and build entrepreneurial insights in you?

5. Results and Discussion

The descriptive results for independent variables areas shown in Table 1 below. The indicators/measures for independent variables were the various lecturing or teaching approaches used at university as shown in Table 1. (Used at the University being studied or at university in general?)

Table 1. Measures for independent variables, their means and standard deviations

Measures	Mean	SD
Do entrepreneurship stories told in lecturers motivate you?	3.97	.534
Have entrepreneurship videos shared in class motivated you to be an entrepreneur?	3.83	.747
Does crafting a business plan make you find it easy to start your business?	3.73	.859
Does conducting research in entrepreneurship as an assignment make you develop skills for starting your own business?	4.53	.098
Does class presentations make you feel confident to present in front of any given audience?	3.56	1.153
Does playing entrepreneurship games online motivate you towards becoming self employed?	4.34	.672
Has online learning sharpened your analytical skills necessary to start a thriving business?	2.09	1.107
Are videos used in online learning motivational and build entrepreneurial insights in you?	2.78	1.291

Source: SPSS Output.

The results show that:

1) Students largely agree at (M = 4.53, SD = 0.98) that conducting research in entrepreneurship develops their skills for starting a business.
2) There was largely some disagreement (with a mean and standard deviation of M = 2.09, SD = 1.107) that online learning sharpens one's analytical skills necessary to start a thriving business.
3) Students largely agree at (M = 4.34, SD = :672) that playing entrepreneurship games online motivates them towards becoming self-employed.
4) There was some disagreement or being undecided on that whether the use of videos in online learning are motivational and build entrepreneurial insights in them (with a mean and standard deviation of M = 2.78, SD = 1.291).
5) Students are moderately motivated by stories told in lecturers (M = 3.97, SD = 0,534).
6) There was a moderate agreement (with a mean and standard deviation 3.56, SD = 1.153) that pitching business ideas in class make you feel confident to present in front of any given audience.
7) Students moderately agree (M = 3.83, SD = 0.747) that entrepreneurship videos shared in class motivated them to be an entrepreneurs.
8) Students felt that business planning made it easy to start their own business (with M = 3.73, SD = 0,859)

Respondents were also asked whether being an entrepreneur was advantageous or not and whether it was an attractive career. The results are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Measures on independent variables and their means and standard deviations

Measures	Mean	SD
Does being an entrepreneur bring better advantages over disadvantages?	3.83	.883
Is a career as an entrepreneur more attractive?	4.48	.756

The results show that the students largely agreed that entrepreneurship is an attractive career path, with a mean and standard deviation of M = 4.48, SD = 0.756. The students somewhat agreed that being an entrepreneur brings better advantages over disadvantages (with a mean and standard deviation of M = 3.83, SD = .883).

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were calculated to check on the directions and strengths among the variables. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Showing correlations among variables

		Isentrepreneurship more attractive?	Entrepreneurship advantages?
Crafting a business plan	Pearson Correlation	-.141*	-.297**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	300	300
Entrepreneurship stories told	Pearson Correlation	-.041	-.140
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000
	N	300	300
Videos shared in class	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.316**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	300	300
Research	Pearson Correlation	.693*	.586*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	300	300

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results show that there was a somewhat strong positive correlation between entrepreneurship research and entrepreneurship as a more attractive career path, ($r = .693$, significant at $p < .05$,) and a moderate positive correlation with entrepreneurship as having more advantages ($r = .0.586$, significant at $p < .05$). Results also showed some positive though somewhat small correlations between teaching using videos shared in classand entrepreneurship as a more attractive career ($r = 0.472$, $p = 0.000$) and between teaching using videos shared in class and entrepreneurship being advantageous ($r = 0.316$, $p = 0.000$).

There were some very small negative correlations between entrepreneurship stories and entrepreneurship being an attractive career path ($r = -.041$, $p < .05$), and between entrepreneurship stories and entrepreneurship being advantageous ($r = -0.140$, $p = 0.000$).

There was a small negative relationship between crafting a business plan and entrepreneurship being an attractive career path ($r = -.141$, $p< .05$) and between crafting a business plan and entrepreneurship being advantageous ($r = -2.97$, $p< .05$). For instance, negative correlations may imply that as opinions on entrepreneurship being an attractive career path increase, opinions on effectiveness of teaching using entrepreneurship stories and on entrepreneurship being advantageous decrease.

Although corelations do not necessarily imply causation, they may give an extent of the strength and direction of the relationship among variables. They maygive an insight on further study of the factors that may affect students' entrepreneurial orientations and intentions.

6. Regression Model Summary

A linear regression model was run to test the variability explained by the variables that displayed the strongest correlations on student intentions to start a business.

Table 4. Regression model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.619[a]	.548	.501	7.062

a. Predictors: (Constant), Shared videos in class, conducting research, Source: Regression output in SPSS using research data collected in the study.

The results show that about 50% of the variance was explained, as indicated by the adjusted R Square of 0.501 in Table 4. The teaching approach as indicated, is therefore significant in motivating students in their intentions towards starting an enterprise or small business.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

The results show that adequate and effective teaching approaches have the effect of stimulating entrepreneurship intentions among students. The results show that the students largely agreed that entrepreneurship is an attractive career path, (with a mean and standard deviation of M = 4.48, SD = 0.756). The results show that there was a somewhat strong positive correlation between entrepreneurship research and entrepreneurship as a more attractive career path, (significant at $r = .693$; $p < .05$) and a moderate positive correlation with entrepreneurship as having more advantages, (significant at $r = .586$; $p < .05$). This means that the entrepreneurship teaching approach which was most effective in stimulating entrepreneurial intentions among students was research, in which students were involved in conducting business research and being at the centre of learning rather than crafting long and laborious business plans for a proposed business idea. Practical activities are therefore recommended for stimulating entrepreneurial intentions among students rather than theoretical approaches of learning such as telling of success stories and sharing videos.

References

Azim, M. T., & Akbar, M. M. (2010). Entrepreneurship education in Bangladesh: A study based on programme inputs. *South Asia Journal of Management, 17*(4), 21-36

Bell, R. (2019). Predicting entrepreneurial intention across the university. *Education+ Training, 61*(7/8), 815-831. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-05-2018-0117

Colette, H., Hill, F., & Leitch, C. (2005). Entrepreneurship education and training: Can entrepreneurship be taught? *Education and Training, 47*(3), 138-169. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910510592211

Cross, M., & Ndofirepi, A. (Eds.) (2017). *Knowledge and Change in African Universities, 1-13*. © 2017 Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-842-6_1

Garazi, A., & Jose-Antonio, C. D. (2019). *Entrepreneurship Education in Spain Universities*. Bizkai Lab: Entrepreneurship centre.

Garwe, E. C., & Thondhlana, J. (2019). Higher education systems and institutions, Zimbabwe. *Encyclopedia of international higher education systems and institutions.* Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_479-1

Honig, B. (2004). Entrepreneurship education: towards a model of contingency based business planning. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 3*(3), 258-273. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2004.14242112

Laukkanen, M. (2000). Exploring alternative approaches in high-level entrepreneurship education: creating micro-mechanisms for endogenous regional growth. *Entrepreneurship and development, 12*(1), 25-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/089856200283072

Lekoko, M., Rankhumise, E. M., & Ras, P. (2012) The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education: what matters most? *African Journal of Business Management, 6*(51), 12023-12033. https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBMx12.001

Malebana, M. J. (2012). *Entrepreneurial intent of final year commerce students in the rural provinces of South Africa* (Thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria).

Mcmullan, W., Chrisman, J., & Vesper, K. (2002). *Lessons from successful innovations in entrepreneurial support programming*.

Murinda, G., & Gasva, D. (2013). *Entrepreneurship In Education Module PGDE 215*. Harare: Zimbabwe Open University.

Nabi, G. (2010) Entrepreneurial intentions among students: towards a re-focused research agenda. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 17*(4), 537-551. https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001011088714

Pfeifer, S., Šarlija, N., & Zekić Sušac, M. (2016). Shaping the entrepreneurial mindset: Entrepreneurial intentions of business students in Croatia. *Journal of Small Business Management, 54*(1), 102-117. https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12133

Piperopoulos, P., & Dimov, D. (2015). Bursting bubbles or building streams? Entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Small Business Management, 53*(4), 970-985. https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12116

Souitas, V., Zerbinati, S., & Al-Lahman, A. (2007). Do entrepreneurship programmes raise entrepreneurial intention of science and engineering students? The effect of learning, inspiration and resources. *Journal of Business Venturing, 22*(4), 566-591. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2006.05.002