

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDENTS' ATTITUDES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract

The study examined attitudes of business students (n = 106) towards entrepreneurship in an international business management degree programme in Finland. The findings indicated that male students did not have more entrepreneurial features than female students, but they had more motivational factors and interest for entrepreneurship than female students. The barriers of entrepreneurship are lower for male students than the female students. The entrepreneurial features and characteristics are positively related to the interest for one's own enterprise and to the entrepreneurial motives. In addition, motivational factors are negatively correlated to the barriers of entrepreneurship. The findings illustrated that even if there was an entrepreneur in the core family or among acquaintances, it had no statistically significant influence on the entrepreneurial intention of the students. Further, to summarise the findings related to the stability of attitudes, it seems that they do not differ between the academic study groups or change during the study years, but remain the same.

Key words: attitudes, entrepreneurship, gender, intention, students

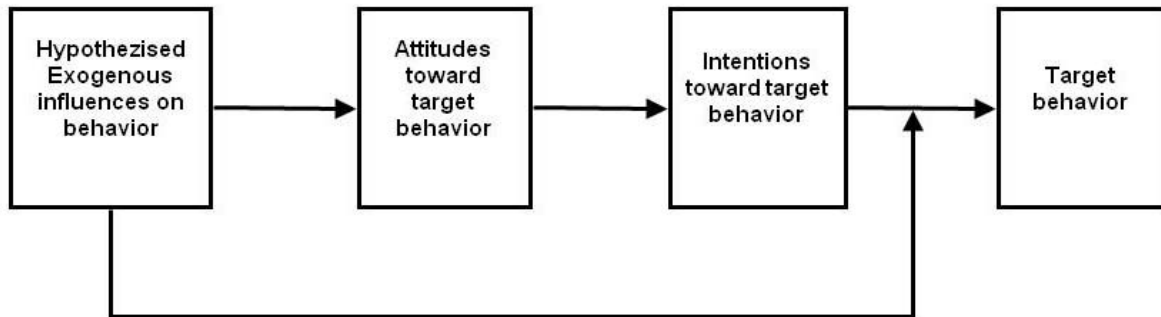
INTRODUCTION

Attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioural control have influence on one's own intentions. According to the theory of planned behaviour, people act in accordance with their intentions and perceptions of control over the behaviour. (Ajzen, 2001). For example, to start a business is intentional and can best be predicted by intentions. Starting a business can not be predicted by attitudes, beliefs, personalities or demographics. However, intentions are best predicted by certain attitudes. In other words, attitudes predict intentions which, in turn, predict behaviour, and further, only intentions directly affect behaviour, while attitudes affect intentions. (Ajzen 2001; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). Figure 1 presents the basic intention-based process model.

In general, an attitude represents a summary evaluation of a psychological object. Further, one's own belief associates the object with a certain attribute, and the person's overall attitude toward an object is determined by the subjective values of the object's attributes in interaction with the strength of the associations. Only beliefs that are readily accessible in memory influence attitudes at any given moment (Ajzen, 2001). Thus, an attitude is a mentally prepared state for any known subject, and it is a subjective consciousness that is affected by the environment. The attitude toward entrepreneurship, in turn, is an individual's concept about entrepreneurship, assessment, and inclination towards entrepreneurial behaviour of self-employment. (Chen & Lai 2010, 3). All in all, attitudes are relevant for understanding and predicting people's social behaviour (Ajzen, 2001). This quantitative study aimed to find out the attitudes of business students towards entrepreneurship in a business

management programme in Finland. It is worth emphasising that the aim was not to examine their intention as a planned behaviour. Further, since the level of intention seems to be higher when the students have spent a long period of time in a foreign country (DeGeorge & Fayolle, 2008), the sample has been selected by including only international student groups in it. Further, the sample consisted of female and male students, and they represented different nationalities.

Figure 1: The basic intention-based process model (Krueger & Carsrud 1993, 317)



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main objective of the study was to find out the attitudes of international students towards entrepreneurship. Based on the objective of this study, the research questions were formulated according to the findings of the previous studies as follows:

Gender differences of entrepreneurial attitudes

Despite the increasing number of females who start their own businesses in the western countries, their number still lags behind that of male entrepreneurs (Ljunggren & Kolvereid 1996, 3; Verheul, van Stel & Thurik 2006, 151). The distinction between female and male entrepreneurship reflects the work-force in general. Traditional occupations for female entrepreneurs have been, for example, in hairdressing, and in the hotel and restaurant business. Nowadays female entrepreneurs act also in other fields, such as in training and consultancy. (Aaltio et al., 2008). In previous studies new female entrepreneurs have emphasized independence as a reason for starting up a new venture (Ljunggren & Kolvereid 1996; Carrier et al., 2008). Further, common reasons for women to start up a business are also the desire for self-fulfillment and the possibility of making profit. (Carrier et al., 2008).

According to the research findings of Verheul, van Stel & Thurik (1996) there is a positive effect of the life satisfaction on female entrepreneurship. They explained the fact that for women, it may be important that they feel confident about themselves and the environment before they decide to start a business.

According to several previous studies male students express higher interest for entrepreneurship and are more likely to start their own businesses. For example, in the findings of Urbano (2006) gender had a significant effect on the intention of starting up one's own company. Also the findings of Kundu and Rani (2008) demonstrated that gender and family background had significant effects on determining one's entrepreneurial attitude orientation in general. However, there are also a few studies which indicate that gender had no significant effect on intentions to start a business. In other words, female students are as

likely as male students to become entrepreneurs and set up their own businesses. (Shinnar et al., 2009).

Thus, based on these contradictory perspectives introduced above and in order to understand the gender differences in the selected context, the first research question was formulated as follows: **“How does gender influence the attitudes towards entrepreneurship?”**

Entrepreneurial characteristics, interest, motives and barriers

There are several studies indicating many positive characteristics related to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour. For example, Henry et al. (2003) have summarized the main focus of the previous psychological studies related to entrepreneurial characteristics between 1961 – 1998 as follows: need for achievement, need for power, need for affiliation, risk-taking propensity, internal locus of control, initiative/drive/enthusiasm, confidence, need for autonomy and independence, innovativeness, decision-making, communication abilities, commitment/determination, leadership, judgement, tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, a grip on reality, and vision. The findings of Chen and Lai (2010) indicated that the students' attitude toward entrepreneurship was affected by environmental cognition and personal traits, which indirectly effects attitudes toward entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the need for achievement, locus of control and creative thinking were the most important characteristics for entrepreneurship. Ristimäki (2004) summarises the features and characteristics of a person behaving entrepreneurially as follows: being self-confident, persistent, creative, independent, flexible, energetic, dynamic, optimistic, and having an ability to take risks, need for achievement, uncertainty-bearing attitude, and sense of responsibility. He continues that the diversity of the features is large and some of them are related to personality, while some of them are related to learning and growth. Also Gibb (2005) argues that many entrepreneurial features and characteristics can be developed, yet some of them can also be regarded as in-born characteristics.

Nowadays more and more young highly educated people with formal management skills establish their own enterprises. They might lack work experience and therefore many realities of business life, yet often they are full of enthusiasm and motivation which are required particularly in many new industries. In fact, the key characteristics of successful entrepreneurs are related to the way in which they approach their tasks. The characteristics base on their commitment, interest and motivation. (Wickham, 1998). Motivation arouses, directs and maintains human behavior toward attaining some goal. According to the findings of numerous studies entrepreneurs seem to have higher achievement motivation than non-entrepreneurs. (Henry et al., 2003). In the findings of Urbano's study (2006) the most significant motives to become an entrepreneur among university students were related to personal independency and creating something for your own.

Based on the references presented above, and in order to understand entrepreneurial characteristics, interest, motives and barriers in the selected context, the second research question was formulated as follows: **“How are Entrepreneurial characteristics and Interest for one's own enterprise as well as Entrepreneurial motives and Barriers of entrepreneurship related to each other?”**

Entrepreneurial intention

Entrepreneurial intention refers to the intention to start a new venture. The findings of Pihkala (2008) indicate that entrepreneurial intention of polytechnic (UAS) students seems to be constant during the studies. Further, although the studies of higher education increase

the awareness of entrepreneurship in general, they do not support and enhance the entrepreneurial intention. In fact, it seems that the conceptions of entrepreneurship became more negative during the studies, which does not support the entrepreneurial intention to set up one's own business. The variable of entrepreneurial intention for a study can be operationalized in different ways. For example, Urbano (2006) asked directly if a respondent had ever thought seriously of setting up or founding one's own company. He gave five-scale alternatives for answering (number 1 being "No, never" and number 5 being "Yes, I have a firm intention of setting up a company"). Further, Autio et al. (2001) used the statements in assessing the perceived likelihood of the individual to start a new firm, either on part-time or full-time basis, within one or five years from the time when the survey was carried out. The findings of Urbano (2006) indicated that if there were entrepreneurs among relatives, it had a significant effect on the intention of starting up one's own company. Also the findings of Degeorge & Fayolle (2008) support that the level of intention seems to be higher when there is an entrepreneur as a close relative, yet at the statistical level the relation was not significant in their results. To find out this relationship in the selected context, the third research question of the study was formulated as follows: **"How is the perceived entrepreneurial intention related to there being an entrepreneur in the core family or among acquaintances?"**

Stability of attitudes

Strong attitudes are expected to be relatively resistant to change. Thus, despite some recent contradictory findings, strong attitudes are said to be relatively stable over time, to be resistant to persuasion, and to predict manifest behaviour. Further, high personal relevance of information on which an attitude is based increases its strength. (Ajzen, 2001). According to the findings of Degeorge and Fayolle (2008) entrepreneurial intention level seems to be a stable variable over a long period time. In other words, the academic year of the programme does not have influence on the variable, which was also supported by the findings of Shinnar et al. (2009). In addition, based on previous studies, it seems that when attitudes change, the new attitude overrides but does not replace the old attitude. According to this model of dual attitudes, a person can simultaneously hold two different attitudes toward a given object in the same context. Then, one attitude is implicit or habitual and the other one is explicit. (Ajzen, 2001). For example, according to the findings of Leskinen (1999) the changes of students' conceptions were relatively limited. However, negative attitudes were increased during the studies.

Finally, to find out the stability of the attitudes in the selected context, the fourth research question of the study was formulated as follows: **"How does the academic year influence on the attitudes towards entrepreneurship?** And further: **"How do the attitudes of the student groups change between the different academic years?"**

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by using a questionnaire. It included 27 statements related to the four main themes to find out the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The first theme was "Entrepreneurial features and characteristics" and it had nine variables of which some were related to personal traits and to some learnt abilities. The second theme was called "Entrepreneurial motives" and it had six variables. The third theme concerned "Interest for one's own enterprise" and it had four variables. Finally, the fourth theme was related to "Barriers of entrepreneurship" and it had eight variables. It is worth mentioning the following things about the questionnaire: all the 27 statements were in one list, not categorised according to the themes introduced above, and there were both positive and negative statements. Beside 27 statements (alternatives to answer were from 1 to 5), the

students were asked questions as background information, gender, academic year, and if there were entrepreneurs in their core family or in their acquaintances. Further, they were asked if they have thought about setting up their own business in the future, by giving five different alternatives to answer (see Table 1). However, it is worth mentioning that in this study entrepreneurial intention means the likelihood of starting a business in the near future (yet it does not refer to the intentional planned behavior, cf. Ajzen, 2001). The study was carried out in November - December 2009 and four different international student groups were selected in the sample (n = 106). The questionnaires were delivered to the students at the beginning of classes and the students were asked to answer the questions. The questionnaires were returned back as soon as they were answered by the students. In addition, two of the student groups had answered the same questionnaires in November 2008 already, therefore the development aspect of the attitudes was included in the study and the findings of the two groups (study group and reference group) were compared between the years 2008 and 2009 (see Table 1). In the study group, about 60% of the sample was female and 40% male students. They represented many different nationalities from all the continents. The group of international business students (IBC) was studying in Belgium as ERASMUS exchange students and they were from different European countries.

Table 1: Characteristics of the samples

Sample in 2009 (n = 106): <i>Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Academic year	First (BM1)	29	27.3%
	Second (BM2)	22	20.8%
	Third (BM3)	19	17.9%
	Third – Fourth (IBC)	36	34.0%
2. Gender	Male	42	40.0%
	Female	63	60.0%
	No answer	1	
3. Entrepreneurs in core family	Yes	58	55.8%
	No	46	44.2%
4. Entrepreneurs in acquaintances	Yes	72	68.6%
	No	33	31.4%
	No answer	1	
5. Entrepreneurial intention	Had not	8	7.7%
	Sometimes toyed with the idea and dreamed about it	61	58.7%
	Some plans already made	28	26.9%
	Already started a business or was a business owner	7	6.7%
	No answer	2	
Sample (reference group) in 2008 (n = 58):	1st academic year (is 2 nd in 2009)	39	67.2%
	2nd academic year (is 3 rd in 2009)	19	32.8%

The data analysis was made by using the SPSS-software. First, the frequencies, means and standard deviations were examined by each variable, and crosstabs were made. Then the means of the variables were combined as the combined variables according to the four themes introduced above. The correlation between the combined variables were examined and tested by using correlation analysis (Pearson) and the crosstabs by using Pearson Chi-Square tests. In addition, T-tests were used to test differences statistically between two student groups (Independent-Samples T-Test) and one-tailed variance analyses between several groups. Finally, the findings were reported according to the research questions of the study.

FINDINGS

Gender differences of entrepreneurial attitudes

The results for the gender differences of the attitudes are shown in Table 2. In comparison of the means of the variables, it seems that there are no big differences of the variables between male and female students. However, the differences were examined further and tested by using t-tests (Independent-Samples T-Test), and in six variables there were statistical differences between genders (see Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the means and T-tests by gender

Statements	Male (n = 42) Mean / St.D	Female (n = 63) Mean / St.D	T-Test Sig. (2-tailed)
Note: the alternatives to answer were from 1 to 5, while 5 being correspond to the respondent's opinion very well			
1. An entrepreneur holds an esteemed position in society	4.00 / 0.80	3.89 / 0.79	p = 0.482
2. An entrepreneur has the chance to be independent, his/her own master	4.33 / 0.85	4.29 / 0.77	p = 0.766
3. The entrepreneurial risk is not for me	2.17 / 0.93	2.52 / 1.06	p = 0.080
4. I like to work in changing circumstances	3.62 / 1.08	3.43 / 1.01	p = 0.360
5. It is no use becoming an entrepreneur without practical experience	3.32 / 1.35	3.83 / 1.14	p = 0.042*
6. You cannot educate yourself to entrepreneurship; it is a native talent or a trait learned at home	2.36 / 1.06	2.52 / 1.01	p = 0.419
7. An entrepreneur can affect his success with his own actions	4.45 / 0.67	4.27 / 0.83	p = 0.236
8. Entrepreneurship is interesting and challenging	4.51 / 0.71	4.24 / 0.80	p = 0.077
9. I would like to utilise my education in my own enterprise	4.29 / 0.74	3.63 / 1.20	p = 0.002**
10. My income level is better as an entrepreneur than in paid work	3.36 / 0.98	3.00 / 1.01	p = 0.078
11. Entrepreneurship takes all the time so there is not enough time left for the family or my own hobbies	3.12 / 0.99	3.29 / 1.02	p = 0.410
12. I cannot tolerate economic uncertainty	2.67 / 0.93	3.03 / 0.93	p = 0.052
13. As an entrepreneur I cannot develop myself enough	1.95 / 0.91	1.97 / 0.97	p = 0.093
14. As an entrepreneur the quality of life is better than if I would work in a paid job	3.36 / 1.10	2.78 / 0.94	p = 0.005**
15. My education does not support my becoming an entrepreneur	1.79 / 1.00	2.27 / 1.08	p = 0.023
16. Entrepreneurship just does not interest me	1.64 / 0.96	2.37 / 1.20	p = 0.001***
17. As an entrepreneur I have a chance to succeed	4.19 / 0.71	4.03 / 0.86	p = 0.323
18. I do not master the skills required in business	2.14 / 1.05	2.78 / 0.97	p = 0.002**
19. As an entrepreneur I could take responsibility for my work	4.50 / 0.74	4.32 / 0.78	p = 0.233
20. In my work I want to advance resolutely to the goals I have set	4.27 / 0.67	4.21 / 0.85	p = 0.694
21. I do not want to be responsible for the enterprise and its employees	1.88 / 0.95	2.30 / 1.24	p = 0.066
22. I would become an entrepreneur if a suitable opportunity would knock	4.43 / 0.80	3.79 / 0.94	p = 0.001***
23. An entrepreneur's life is nothing but toil	2.10 / 0.98	2.22 / 0.97	p = 0.516
24. If you work hard you can make it as an entrepreneur, too	4.02 / 1.20	3.79 / 1.11	p = 0.316
25. Being an entrepreneur, I could make independent decisions	4.40 / 0.70	4.16 / 0.70	p = 0.081
26. I want to work in a familiar and safe environment	3.57 / 0.97	3.71 / 1.18	p = 0.517
27. Entrepreneurs are usually doing quite well economically	3.38 / 1.06	3.26 / 0.90	p = 0.527

Significance limits: P < 0.001***, P < 0.01**, P < 0.05*

First, the difference of the statement 5 "no use of becoming an entrepreneurs without practical experience" was almost statistically significant (p = 0.042). The attitudes regarding the utilisation of one's own education in his own enterprise had a significant difference (p =

0.002) between genders. Then, in the attitudes concerning the better quality of the life as an entrepreneur than in paid work there was a significant difference ($p = 0.005$). In terms of interest, the difference was very significant ($p = 0.001$) between the male and female students. The difference of the attitudes related to the mastery of the skills required in business was significant ($p = 0.002$), and the difference of attitudes related to the statement of the "I would become an entrepreneur if a suitable opportunity would knock" was statistically very significant ($p = 0.001$).

Then, the variables were combined according to the themes (introduced in the methodology section) as four combined variables (means of the means) and they were compared between male and female students (see Table 3). The differences were statistically tested (independent-Samples T-Test) and the findings showed that there were statistically almost significant differences between the genders in the combined variables 2 and 3: according to the findings male students had more motivational factors ($p = 0.015$) as well as interest for their own entrepreneurship ($p = 0.025$). In addition, the difference was significant ($p = 0.025$) in the barriers of entrepreneurship: the male students had lower barriers of entrepreneurship than the female students.

Table 3: The combined variables by gender

	Male (n = 42)		Female (n = 63)		T-test Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	St.D.	Mean	St.D.	
1. Entrepreneurial features and characteristics	3.72	0.35	3.70	0.38	$p = 0.085$
2. Motivational factors for entrepreneurship	3.81	0.58	3.55	0.46	$p = \mathbf{0.015^*}$
3. Interest for one's own enterprise	3.71	0.44	3.51	0.46	$p = \mathbf{0.025^*}$
4. Barriers of entrepreneurship	2.31	0.55	2.65	0.54	$p = \mathbf{0.003^{**}}$

Significance limits: $P < 0.01^{**}$, $P < 0.05^*$

Entrepreneurial characteristics, interest, motives and barriers

The combined variables related to Entrepreneurial characteristics, interest, motives and barriers were tested by using correlation analysis (Pearson). First, Entrepreneurial features and characteristics and Entrepreneurial motives had an almost significant correlation ($r = 0.243$, $p = 0.015$). Entrepreneurial features and characteristics and Interest for one's own enterprise had a very significant correlation ($r = 0.322$, $p = 0.001$) with each other. Then, there was also a significant correlation ($r = 0.315$, $p = 0.002$) between entrepreneurial features and characteristics and motivational factors for entrepreneurship. In addition, an almost negative correlation ($r = -0.198$, $p = 0.049$) existed between Motivational factors for entrepreneurship and Barriers of entrepreneurship. Two-tailed Pearson correlations between the four combined variables are introduced in Table 4.

Entrepreneurial intention

Entrepreneurial intention was operationalised by giving four different alternatives to answer: No intention, Sometimes been in mind, Some plans already made, and Own business started already. The findings are presented together with the information of whether there is an entrepreneur in the core family or among the acquaintances of the respondent which were combined as one background (see Table 5). The findings illustrated that most of the students ($n = 90$) had an entrepreneur in the core family or among the acquaintances. Nevertheless, the differences were examined further and tested by using Pearson Chi-Square tests variable, but no statistical differences were found.

Table 4: Correlations between the combined variables

		1. Entrepreneurial features and characteristics	2. Motivational factors for e-ship	3. Interest for one's own enterprise	4. Barriers of e-ship
1. Entrepreneurial features and characteristics	Pearson Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	105			
2. Motivational factors for entrepreneurship	Pearson Correlation	0.243*			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.015			
	N	100	101		
3. Interest for one's own enterprise	Pearson Correlation	0.322**	0.315**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.002		
	N	103	99	104	
4. Barriers of entrepreneurship	Pearson Correlation	0.184	-0.198*	-0.123	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.063	0.049	0.218	
	N	103	99	102	104

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), *Correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (2-tailed).

Table 5: Intention to start own business

	An entrepreneur in the core family (parents or siblings) or among acquaintances (relatives or friends)		Count
	Yes	No	
No intention	7	1	8
Sometimes been in mind	51	10	61
Some plans already made	25	4	29
Own business started	7	0	7
Count	90	15	105

Stability of attitudes

The findings related to the stability of attitudes are presented as combined variables in Table 6. Although the differences between the academic student groups were quite small, they were tested by using one-tailed variance analyses (ANOVA). Nevertheless, no statistically significant differences were found between the academic student groups.

Table 6: Combined variables by academic student groups

	BM1 (n = 29)	St.Dev	BM2 (n = 22)	St.Dev	BM3 (n = 19)	St.Dev	IBC34 (n = 36)	St.Dev	ANOVA Sig.
1. Entrepreneurial features and characteristics	3.70	0.374	3.78	0.502	3.58	0.353	3.73	0.250	p = 0.296
2. Motivational factors for entrepreneurship	3.76	0.489	3.61	0.675	3.50	0.535	3.68	0.438	p = 0.617
3. Interest for one's own enterprise	3.59	0.455	3.46	0.424	3.65	0.394	3.62	0.505	p = 0.335
4. Barriers of entrepreneurship	2.43	0.527	2.7	0.681	2.38	0.504	2.53	0.529	p = 0.142

Next, the development of the attitudes of two student groups between the years 2008 and 2009 is introduced. In order to understand the development in detail, the development of

the attitudes is introduced by the groups: Group A refers to a student group which started their studies in the autumn 2008 and group B refers to a student group which started their studies in the autumn 2007. In other words, the development of the attitudes demonstrates the development of the attitudes during the first and the second academic years as well as the development during the second and the third academic years (see Table 7).

Table 7: Development of the attitudes during two academic years

	BM1 (group A) in 2008	St.Dev	BM2 (group A) in 2009	St.Dev	BM2 (group B) in 2008	St.Dev	BM3 (group B) in 2009	St.Dev
1. Entrepreneurial features and characteristics	3.77	0.34	3.78	0.50	3.68	0.37	3.58	0.35
2. Motivational factors for entrepreneurship	3.63	0.65	3.61	0.68	3.43	0.41	3.50	0.54
3. Interest for one's own enterprise	3.65	0.46	3.46	0.42	3.66	0.31	3.65	0.39
4. Barriers of entrepreneurship	2.34	0.54	2.70	0.68	2.46	0.62	2.38	0.50

Finally, the findings were also tested: first as the separate study groups A and B between the academic years, then together as one group between the academic years. However, no statistical differences were found. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning two things related to the findings: first, there is a small change of attitudes in all variables between the first and the second year (the means of three first variables decreased and the mean of the barriers of entrepreneurship increased). Secondly, there was also a small change in the findings between the second and the third academic year, yet in a different way from the first and the second academic years. In terms of Entrepreneurial features and characteristics the means decreased, the means of Motivational factors for entrepreneurship increased, Interest for one's own entrepreneurship remained the same, and Barriers of entrepreneurship decreased to some extent. Although there were no statistical differences, however the findings might indicate the nature of the changes in the context.

DISCUSSION

The main findings of the study

In order to answer how the gender influences the attitudes towards entrepreneurship in the selected context, it can be summarised that the findings indicated that the male students did not have more entrepreneurial features than the female students. However, they have more motivational factors and interest for entrepreneurship than the female students, which supports Urbano's (2006) as well as Kundu and Rani's (2008) research results. In addition, the barriers of entrepreneurship are lower for the male students than for the female students. Based on the findings it can be concluded that the entrepreneurial features and characteristics are positively related to the interest for one's own enterprise as well as the entrepreneurial motives. In addition, motivational factors for entrepreneurship are negatively related to the barriers of entrepreneurship. The findings illustrated that even if there was an entrepreneur in the core family or among acquaintances, it had no statistically significant influence on the perceived entrepreneurial intention of the international students (cf. Urbano 2006; Degeorge & Fayolle 2008). Further, in order to summarise the findings related to the development of attitudes, it seems that they do not differ between the academic study

groups or between the study years, but remain almost the same. This supports also the theory that strong attitudes are expected to be relatively stable over time (Ajzen, 2001).

Limitations of the study

The findings of this study improved the understanding of international business students' attitudes. However, there are limitations of the study which should be taken into consideration. First, the size of the sample was rather limited; therefore the findings should be generalized carefully. Another limitation of the study is related to the development aspect: in order to understand the stability or potential changes of the attitudes better, the development of the attitudes should be followed longer, from the beginning of the studies to the graduation of the students in order to have a better understanding of the development.

Thus, although the findings helped to answer the research questions, many other questions remain, and it provides possibilities for further studies. For example, a longitudinal study covering several international business programmes both in Finland and in other countries might be useful in understanding and explaining the topic. In addition, a follow up study for the graduates would better reveal both the attitudes and intentions of the students a couple of years after the graduation. It might also be worth to examine the attitudes and intentions of those students who have really started their own business during the studies or just after their graduation.

Implications and conclusions

The findings can be pondered and conclusions can be drawn from the point of view of the students and teachers, but also from the point of view of society in general. First of all, in terms of scientific contribution, it can be concluded that the findings support quite well many previous studies related to attitudes and entrepreneurial intention. The findings of this study revealed the attitudes and entrepreneurial intention of international students. Further, since attitudes affect and predict intentions which, in turn, predict behaviour (Ajzen, 2001; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993), it can be concluded that the findings indicated that the entrepreneurial attitudes of the international business students are quite positive. It means that they might have a real intention for setting up their own businesses later. It could be taken into consideration and supported during their studies.

However, based on the previous studies as well as the findings of this study, the attitudes seem to be rather stable during the studies in higher education, which can be concluded in two different ways: depending on the aims of entrepreneurship education in an university, the attitudes could be taken more into consideration while selecting students carefully for entrepreneurship training, based on their attitudes towards entrepreneurship, and provide the training especially for them. On the other hand, if the aim is to increase the more effort could be put on the promotion of all the dimensions of entrepreneurship before and during the studies in higher education.

In general, although the attitudes seem to remain stable during the studies in higher education, the level of them is what accounts. In fact, in order to influence the attitudes, the promotion activities should be taken up much earlier by the society through up-bringing and basic studies. All in all, how to affect and promote entrepreneurial attitudes is still a big practical challenge both for the education and also for the business life.

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