

Characteristics of the entrepreneurial mind-set of students and experienced entrepreneurs explained from a learning perspective

Summary of thesis

"A rapidly growing and complex world causes that students have to deal with grand challenges of our time that are all characterised by high levels of complexity and uncertainty. Being the generation of tomorrow, students of today are expected to deal with these problems in their future working environments.

Since various scholars in the field entrepreneurship state that an entrepreneurial mind-set (EM) enhances dealing with complexity and uncertainty, it is highly relevant to study an EM. As previous research has shown that students structure knowledge differently than experienced entrepreneurs because of differences in context and experience, the expectation is that students have a different EM than experienced entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is assumed that students approach complex and challenging situations differently compared to experienced entrepreneurs. The research aims to describe the characteristics of the entrepreneurial mind-set (EM) of students and experienced entrepreneurs from a learning perspective. The EM is measured with the [Entrepreneurial Mind-set Monitor](#), which is based on Sarasvathy's effectuation theory, while the learning perspective is operationalized with Krueger's critical developmental experiences. The main research questions is as follows: "What characterizes the entrepreneurial mind-set of students and experienced entrepreneurs and how can both be explained from a learning perspective?".

To investigate characteristics of the EM, both quantitative and qualitative research is conducted. It is a mixed methods research that follows a sequential design. 12 experienced entrepreneurs and 181 students participated in this study and completed the mind-set monitor at least once. Retrospective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants. Results of this study indicate that both target groups apply an effectual way of thinking more than a causal way of thinking. Characteristics that describe an EM according to results of this study are: action-oriented, emphasizing opportunities, flexibility, and adaptability under uncertain conditions. The main recommendation is to stimulate the exchange of knowledge, non-cognitive skills and experience between students and experienced entrepreneurs as this will contribute to the development of the EM of both target groups. "

Personal experience of writing a thesis at ELS

From the beginning, I had a positive feeling about writing a thesis at ELS. This was mainly because all the contacts responded quickly and were very supportive. Although writing a thesis at ELS was not completely in line with my initial program and specialisation, the topic of my thesis matched very well with ELS due to the link with entrepreneurship education (i.e. E-Track). Additionally, both supervisors were highly involved and enthusiastic about the project, which ensured a good start and an overall positive personal experience.

Besides entrepreneurship, the link between education, which I contributed to during my thesis, was easily made and recommended by the supervisors. Because of this, I learned how to teach and motivate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the fact that it took a lot of time, I would not expect beforehand that I actually got energy from motivating students. Altogether, I improved various skills such as teaching, interviewing, scientifically writing, and organisational skills to manage different projects while writing my thesis.

The main relevance of writing a thesis for my professional career is that I learned how important it is to evaluate the purpose of a research or project before, but especially during the period. Moreover, I learned that I am especially motivated at the beginning and at the end of a project. As the last nine months confirmed that I get energy from working on the design- and final phase of a project, it should be taken into account that actually doing research or working on details is something that does not perfectly fit my personality and strengths. This is highly relevant while forming teams in a certain context.

