
Guest editorial: Understanding the entrepreneurial process through a multidisciplinary lens: insights from entrepreneurship research in Europe

Guest editorial

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The pertinence of a multidisciplinary perspective in entrepreneurship research

Entrepreneurship, as a research field, has witnessed substantial growth and development over recent decades. This evolution encompasses phases of differentiation, mobilisation and academic legitimacy (Grégoire *et al.*, 2006; Landström, 2020; Kumar and Sureka, 2022). This progress has depended on the integration of different paradigms from diverse disciplines to elucidate entrepreneurial phenomena (Groen, 2005).

Nonetheless, grappling with the multidisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship research presents a formidable challenge. Scholars' dialogue can prove intricate due to the inherent boundaries of different academic domains (Schildt *et al.*, 2006; Dana, 2007). Despite these barriers, it remains crucial to recognise that given the complex tapestry of entrepreneurship, which spans various societal facets, embracing a multi-lens perspective becomes imperative. Through the application of multiple lenses, we can gain enhanced insights into the entrepreneurial process and its manifold implications.

Since the seminal article of Shane and Venkataraman (2000), entrepreneurship scholars have been refocusing entrepreneurship research along the continuum of the entrepreneurial process, aiming to understand the way individuals and opportunities interact (Fayolle, 2013). Specifically, the way opportunities are identified, evaluated and exploited (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) is becoming a key area of research. This has led to important insights about different stages of the entrepreneurial process, from opportunity recognition to exploitation and development. In this special issue, we sought to highlight studies that focus on a process perspective in entrepreneurship as well as studies researching clear, distinct parts of the process of entrepreneurial activity.

In addition, the understanding that the entrepreneurial process is at the nexus of the individual and their environment (Davidsson, 2015) has prompted researchers and practitioners to further question how entrepreneurial competencies can be enhanced to improve the outcomes of this interaction. In this very journal, *the Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, these efforts are recognised and evidenced by the comprehensiveness covered within the topic of entrepreneurial communities, highlighting different ways and different perspectives in which entrepreneurial actors and their environment interact (Chhabra *et al.*, 2022).

To understand the impact of all these diverse factors affecting entrepreneurial activity, a multidisciplinary perspective is important, as it contributes to a broader understanding of the entrepreneurial phenomena. At the same time, different disciplines bring forward different research questions and a variety of research methods, which ultimately demands a cohesion within the field and a common understanding from entrepreneurship scholars on what the field is and what determines its “interestingness” (Landström and Harirchi, 2019).



Taking a multidisciplinary perspective on the entrepreneurial process frequently leads to an expansion of methodological approaches used in entrepreneurship research (Dana and Dana, 2005; Dana and Dumez, 2015). Researchers have drawn inspiration from various disciplines, adopting techniques like experiments and ethnographic design, which have been used outside of entrepreneurship, resulting in a diverse array of methods aimed at enhancing the comprehension of entrepreneurial phenomena. Thus, the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach not only offers insights at theoretical, conceptual and methodological levels but also holds significant pragmatic implications. These implications are pertinent to professionals in the entrepreneurship domain (Costa *et al.*, 2020; Belousova *et al.*, 2020) as well as entrepreneurship educators (Kozlinska *et al.*, 2020).

Interestingly enough, entrepreneurship research has historically developed not only as a multi- and interdisciplinary field of research but also as geographically and culturally diverse (Landström, 2015). While some conceptualisations may be rooted in the idea that entrepreneurship is predominantly the creation of new organisations (Gartner, 1988) and that entrepreneurs possess unique attributes that other people do not have (Gartner, 1990), other perspectives focus on different aspects of entrepreneurial activities (Dana, 2019). For instance, the European view on entrepreneurship is fairly rooted in the Rhineland view of capitalism which values collective success, consensus (even co-management with employees) and long-term vision (Albert, 1991; Bacq and Janssen, 2011). Thus, the European perspective can be characterised by a view of entrepreneurship that encompasses venture and value creation but also education systems, active citizenship and democratic development or, in other words, a way of thinking and living that span beyond organisational contexts (Hytti and O’Gorman, 2004; Spiteri and Maringe, 2014). This conceptualisation of entrepreneurship offers a variety of insights to be drawn from different disciplines alongside adding methodological diversity as well.

At the same time, we observe that often some of these views on entrepreneurial activity easily reflect and are tested in educational settings as a way to enlarge entrepreneurial competencies’ impact on society (Liñán *et al.*, 2018; Durán-Sánchez *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, they encourage the assessment of how interventions in community-based entrepreneurial activities can influence impacts within a context that inherently embodies diversity (Varblane and Mets, 2010). In this sense, the special issue highlights the multidisciplinary character of entrepreneurship, focusing primarily on a number of initiatives, programs and educational contexts in Europe (Fayolle *et al.*, 2005; Fayolle and Kyrö, 2008; Fayolle *et al.*, 2013, 2015).

The articles in this special issue

This special issue *Understanding the Entrepreneurial Process through a Multidisciplinary Lens: Insights from Entrepreneurship Research in Europe* consists of five papers that are devoted to studying the collective entrepreneurial intelligence and enterprising communities, entrepreneurial competencies in the educational settings, entrepreneurial intention and its temporal stability and individual entrepreneurial orientation as a mediator between entrepreneurs’ age and intentions.

In *The Role of Collective Intelligence and Collective Agency in Enterprising Communities* by David Rae and Per Blenker, the authors offer an alternative explanation for traditional entrepreneurship theory based on the phenomenon of entrepreneurial collective intelligence that, in turn, translates into collective action. By exploring the collective as contrasted with individual agency and private knowledge that have become limited, this study strives to understand the generative and regenerative processes of enterprising communities. The authors construct a set of organisational case studies and demonstrate how collective entrepreneurial processes unfold. This work primarily contributes to understanding the interplay between collective intelligence in informing entrepreneurial communities. The

paper also provides information about the cases used, which were built in an innovative manner, highlighting the benefits of this methodology for the study of entrepreneurship in small-scale communities.

In *Find Your Limits and Break Them! Nurturing Students' Entrepreneurship Competence through Self-assessment and Innovative Teaching Methods* by Angelo Riviezzo, Gilda Antonelli, Urve Venesaar, Marianne Kallaste, Tomasz Doroczyński and Agnieszka Kłysik-Urtysek, the authors present a quasi-experimental study where the Entrepreneurship Competence Model is tested in three European countries (Estonia, Italy and Poland) to compare the effects of effectuation-based teaching on students' learning outcomes. Effectuation, as the entrepreneurial decision-making logic framed by [Sarasvathy \(2008\)](#), has gained increased popularity in entrepreneurship research ([Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011](#); [Reymen et al., 2015](#)). In entrepreneurship education, however, the evidence of its application, specifically with regard to the effect on students' competences, remains limited ([Read and Sarasvathy, 2012](#)). This paper demonstrates the effectiveness of effectuation-based teaching for competences development of students with different cultural backgrounds. This paper's contribution is twofold: firstly, this work showcases a learning model that can be applied transversally in different countries with similar effects and outcomes; secondly, by using an experimental approach, the authors contribute to bringing methodological diversity into our field of research, which has been calling for more cause-effect testing methodologies over the last years.

In *Personal Initiative, Risk-Taking, Creativity and Opportunity Discovery among Students* by Ana Junça-Silva, Henrique Duarte and Susana Santos, using a sample of university students from Portugal, the authors analyse the role of personal initiative through risk-taking on opportunity discovery and further explore how this relationship is contingent on individuals' creativity. This paper focuses on opportunity discovery as a key entrepreneurial competence essential to both employment and self-employment. The authors study antecedent competencies such as personal initiative and risk-taking that can be developed through education to have an effect on opportunity discovery. This study provides very useful insights for entrepreneurship education that can be taken into consideration by entrepreneurship educators and researchers. In addition, from a methodological perspective, this paper highlights the importance of multiple points of data collection when studying interventions in entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship outcomes in general. Moreover, the authors use a moderated mediation to theorise and empirically test a process model of how entrepreneurial competencies impact opportunity discovery in an educational setting.

The relevance of longitudinal research is further illustrated in *Entrepreneurial Intentions' Temporal Stability – Intra-Individual and Group-Level Analyses* by Ricardo Belchior and Roisin Lyons. This paper addresses the gap in scholarly knowledge on temporal stability (relative and absolute) of entrepreneurial intentions. It presents results of a series of intra-individual and group-level analyses over an 11-year period, using a sample of university students in Portugal. The study reveals that entrepreneurship education may buffer the deterioration of intentions. Given that most of the impact studies in the field use intentions as a key measure, the novel findings of this study provide a more nuanced reasoning for the intention-behaviour dynamics. This article brings new insights on how we conceptualise entrepreneurial intention. On the methodological side, it showcases a powerful long-term observation of the phenomena and uses a multilevel approach, focusing on individual-level and group-level observations.

In *Age, Entrepreneurial and Intrapreneurial Intentions: The Mediating Role of Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation* by Šejma Aydin, Emil Knezović and Azra Bico, the authors conceptualise and explore individual entrepreneurial orientation as a mediator between the age of an individual and their intentions to start their own venture or act entrepreneurially

in paid employment. The study is conducted in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina and provides some novel evidence on the role of entrepreneurial orientation dimensions (risk-taking, innovativeness and proactiveness) in individuals' intentions. This paper sheds light on the role of age in entrepreneurship, an issue demanding growing attention in the current demographic context of an ageing population. In addition, it showcases an example of a developing economy within the European context and demonstrates how entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial intentions can play a role in this context.

Conclusion

The articles in this special issue approach topics at the core of the individual and opportunity nexus (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). The papers explore individual and collective initiative for entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intention – across time, levels of analysis and contexts, as well as the build-up of entrepreneurial competences through the educational system. While focusing on the early stage of the entrepreneurial process, these papers bring an array of disciplinary perspectives: collective intelligence and agency help us step away from the individual-based view on entrepreneurship and increase our knowledge about enterprising communities. Furthermore, the articles present in this special issue are concrete in that they describe and test specific interventions which have different outcomes throughout the entrepreneurial process. Understanding the impact of these interventions has direct consequences on how we educate students about entrepreneurship. The articles included in this special issue offer important reflections for entrepreneurship education researchers, as well as for educators, such as how to foster competence development but also how to manage intentions throughout the entrepreneurial process. Finally, the multi-disciplinarity of these articles also results in the variety of methods which enrich the toolbox of entrepreneurship researchers.

As our field moves forward, we observe a necessity of combining interesting research questions that bring novel insights for theory building with rigorous methods. The papers collected in this special issue answer both of these demands and offer novel avenues for advancing the field of entrepreneurship research.

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