



**BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ECONOMIC SCIENCES
MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT**

PHD THESIS

- SUMMARY -

IMPROVING THE ROMANIAN ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION BY USING NONFORMAL METHODS IN HIGHSCHOOL

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Cluj-Napoca

2015

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KEY WORDS

Entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, the new economy, culture, national culture, cognitive structures, entrepreneurial cognitions, Theory of planned behaviour, formal education, nonformal education, entrepreneurial education, nonformal methods of education.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary social and economic relations are undergoing radical change, expressed in such concepts as: “knowledge economy”, “weightless economy”, “postindustrial society” or “information society”. The literature suggests the existence of a new factor of production, the intellectual capital, which replaces or perhaps supplements land, labour and capital (Dean & Kretschmer, 2007).

The new economy, also known as the knowledge economy, has progressively replaced the industrial economy, which in its turn replaced the agrarian economy, the last two being focused on the production of material values. It is a type of economy in which the main factors for creating better life conditions are innovative ideas and technologies, embedded in goods and services.

Taking all these into consideration we can say that in the contemporary context, characterized by deregulation, internationalization of knowledge and increase of communication, the only limits are those created by persons and/or personalities, at the individual and at the organizational level; ideas represent capital, and the rest is just money. The equality of chances produce and inequality of achievements (Giddens, 2001), thus underlining the following idea: even if all individuals have access to information, only entrepreneurs transform it into knowledge, generate ideas and then create goods and services. The great amount of knowledge brings up the need for change, for innovation, and this is why it is said that the illiterate of the XXI century are not those who cannot read and write but those who do not want to learn more, who do not want to forget what they have already learnt and constantly learn something new (Chandrasekar, 2012). The most important asset in the contemporary economy and in

the future economy is knowledge, and the people of the future will be, as Peter Drucker said, those who use knowledge, those who offer services, those educated in consonance with the performance criteria of the economic institutions and of the economy in general. In other words, we witness the fact that work involves more and more knowledge –based activities, more and more creativity (Ungureanu & Militaru, 2011, p.7).

Accounting for the theme choice

The PHD thesis is entitled *Improving the Romanian entrepreneurial education by using nonformal methods in highschool*, and in order to account for the theme and the title choice it is necessary to answer the following questions:

- Is entrepreneurship important at the global and at the national level? Why?
- How can the increase of the number of entrepreneurs be stimulated? What are the factors determining the entrepreneurial behaviour?
- What is the role of nonformal education in determining entrepreneurial behaviour?

It has become more and more obvious that economic development and prosperity depend on entrepreneurs. They do their best to create and offer goods and/or services that the customers ask for, thus making the customers' lives better, increasing their work productivity and improving their health. In fact, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs are important in order to encourage and introduce change in a society (Borza *et. al.*, 2009). At the macroeconomic level the econometric studies point out the fact that small and medium innovative enterprises contribute extensively to job creation, innovation and economic development (Carree & Thurik, 2003 apud. Van Gelderen *et. al.*, 2008). In other words, entrepreneurship is important for job creation because entrepreneurs create new businesses. The new businesses, in their turn, create jobs, offer the customers a great variety of goods and services, increase the competitive level, increase productivity due to technological changes, and have a positive impact on people's lives (Amorós & Bosma, 2014). Entrepreneurs are ambitious and they stimulate innovation, speed up the structural changes in the economy, introduce competition, contribute to the increase of the productivity, job creation and national competitiveness.

Entrepreneurship is a contemporary means of getting the individuals involved in the community life. Developing the young people's entrepreneurial skills has positive effects on their own social status, as they acquire financial independence and social recognition. Moreover, there are effects at the local and nation level as well, in the form of economic development and increase of the standards of living.

The decision to become entrepreneur is voluntary and conscious. The entrepreneurial activity is a planned, intentional behaviour, and developing entrepreneurial intentions depends on the personal attitudes towards creating a business. Attitudes, in their turn, reflect the individual beliefs and perceptions determined by one's personality, formal and informal education, personal values and experiences (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993 apud. Mueller, 2004). In this PHD thesis we will refer to formal and nonformal education because informal education is too complex to be debated about at this point, as it includes all the information, unintentional, diffuse, heterogeneous and in a large quantity, that the individuals face daily (Cucuş, 2002, p.45). According to CEDEFOP (2008) informal learning comprises the knowledge acquired unintentionally by doing daily activities, at work, in the family or in any other informal context. The knowledge acquired in this way is not officially certificated, but it is individually and socially validated. Informal learning is also known as experimental learning, accidental learning, on the spot learning. Another significant definition of this type of education is the following: the real process of lifelong learning, in which each individual develops attitudes, strengthens certain values, acquires knowledge and skills through daily experiences, capitalizes the educational resources from the surrounding environment: family and neighbours, workplace or playground, store or market, library or media (Coobs *et. al.*, 1973 apud. Sâmihăian în Costea, 2009, p.10). All these definitions point out the complexity of informal education and its idiosyncrasy, reason for which it cannot be homogenized and studied globally.

Developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship is necessary, but not sufficient, for determining entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial behaviour. Attitudes are not genetically determined but socially built in the family, at school and then at work. Each person has his or her own thinking, feeling and acting patterns, their source being the social environment in which the individual lives and acquires experiences: family,

neighbourhood, school, group of friends, workplace, and generally speaking the entire community. Education offers information and builds skills which allow the individuals to discover their real potential and thus contribute to the future of the society they are part of. Entrepreneurial competences are consolidated through entrepreneurial education and the individuals become aware of the fact that entrepreneurship is a career option as well. The students' creativity can be stimulated if they are allowed and encouraged to identify opportunities in everyday life situations.

A short introduction in the field of research

The information in part I of this PHD thesis is presented from the general to the particular, thus undertaking a deductive reasoning which justifies, in our opinion, the empirical research.

There is a great amount of literature associated with Chapter I, the one which defines, explains and exemplifies the key concepts used in the PHD thesis. Firstly, there are many definitions of "entrepreneurship", and they target different aspects of the concept. Some researchers study, define and explain entrepreneurship as a process, as a process itself and from the point of view of its result, namely creating a business: Bjerke (2007), Kuratko (2005), Shane & Venkataraman (2000), Wennekers & Thurik (1999) etc. On the other hand, there are researchers who study entrepreneurship from the point of view of the personality features related to the individuals who act entrepreneurially: Sánchez Cañizares & Fuentes Garcia (2010), Beugelsdijk (2007), Bjerke (2007) etc. We consider that these approaches cannot be put in a hierarchy as each of them has its own importance to the overall meaning of the concept. Secondly, in order to bring the concept in the contemporary context we have presented the role and implicitly the importance of entrepreneurship in the knowledge economy, quoting or making reference to authors like: Verheul *et. al.* (2002), Curry (2001), Cordellier (2001), Drucker (2001) etc. We chose to use the concept "new economy, knowledge economy" because we believe that it underlines best the relationship between entrepreneurship and the contemporary economy, the former being a process which involves information and knowledge, and the latter being characterized by information explosion.

The data presented in Chapter II, referring to European and Romanian entrepreneurship, are taken from European Commission documents: *Green paper Entrepreneurship in Europe, Key Competences for lifelong Learning. European reference Framework, Eurobarometer Survey on Entrepreneurship, Flash Eurobarometer Survey 354. Entrepreneurship in the EU and beyond, Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe etc.*, but also from the GEM studies, the global and the national reports. We enumerated statistical data regarding the European and the Romanian entrepreneurship, thus pointing out the importance of taking certain measures for developing an entrepreneurial mindset and for increasing the number of entrepreneurs, these agents leading through their work to economic development and increase of the standards of living.

The situation of entrepreneurship in Europe and Romania can be accounted to the cultural values which do not encourage an entrepreneurial mindset, and entrepreneurship itself, things which are presented in Chapter III. Greeve *et al.* (2009) explain the fact that individuals are predetermined by the national culture in which they are raised, before they become part of a company. Webster & White (2010) argue that the economy in general, the national culture, the companies, the business environments, in particular, are all under the influence of the national culture, the economic agents being individuals with culturally-determined values, attitudes and behaviours. Dodd *et al.* (2013), Liñán *et al.* (2013), Klyver & Foley (2012), Hofstede *et al.* (2010), Greeve *et al.* (2009) are just some of the people who defined “culture”. Furthermore, authors like Carsrud & Brännback (2009), Audretsch *et al.* (2002) presented the way in which culture influences entrepreneurship.

Even if we identified characteristics of cultures which encourage and discourage entrepreneurship, an intervention at the level of national culture is in our opinion impossible, or it takes a very long period of time. As a consequence, we particularized the “intervention area” and we focused on entrepreneurial education which can be a means of developing entrepreneurial skills. Formal education, defined and explained by authors like Belciu *et al.* (2011), Costea (2009), Cucos (2002) etc. is represented in this PHD thesis by the compulsory course for highschool students, entitled *Entrepreneurial education*. We presented and we studied the subject’s curriculum, the observations

being presented in the PHD thesis. Based on the contents of the curriculum and on their specific competences we pointed out that this compulsory course does not have attitudinal objectives. Moreover, up to the present moment we have not come across researches which measure the efficiency of the course, maybe by linking it to the labour market. We have not come across statistics which prove the fact that there is a direct relationship between this course and the increase of the number of young entrepreneurs, thus justifying its existence in the national curriculum for highschool students, and therefore its importance.

The aim of this PHD thesis is not to underestimate the importance of the compulsory course entitled *Entrepreneurial education*, to test its efficiency or to change the national curriculum, but to create an instrument with which this course can be compared, namely the optional entrepreneurial education course in which we apply nonformal methods of education. We compare the two elements from the point of view of developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, starting from the following premise: attitude is an antecedent of intention, the latter being a significant predictor of behaviour, according to Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The entrepreneurs act at the microeconomic level but the progress is at the macroeconomic level. The entrepreneurs link the institutions at the microeconomic level with the results at the macroeconomic level. Entrepreneurship is important in the new economy, at the national and at the global level, and therefore developing positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship is a priority for both formal and nonformal education.

Formal education refers to all the systematic and intentional influences, framed by specialized institutions (schools, universities), with the purpose of developing human personality (Cucoş, 2002, p.45). This type of education is meant to help the subjects acquire knowledge and develop skills systematically, in order to function efficiently in the society. On the other hand, nonformal education refers to all the educational influences taking place outside the classroom, usually extra-curricular activities, or even optional activities. Nonformal education does not have a formative character but its activities are tailored in order to meet the various particular interests of the subjects

involved. Therefore, among the main goals of nonformal education we find the following: supporting those who want to develop particular business aspects in the field of trade, agriculture, services, industry etc. (Cucuș, 2002, p.45).

In the year 2003 the subject entitled *Entrepreneurial education* was introduced in the national curriculum for X grade highschool students, all types of highschools, all profiles and all specializations, with a class per week, and therefore around 35-36 classes in a school year. The curriculum for this compulsory subject, approved by the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research through Order No. 4598 / 31. 08. 2004, enumerates the general and the specific competences that ideally should be developed through those 35 – 36 classes of *Entrepreneurial education*¹. According to this document, there is a direct link between the contents of the curriculum and the competences which need to be developed, a link which ignores the attitudinal component. However, the fact that the students acquire knowledge related to a certain subject, in this case entrepreneurship, does not guarantee the fact that they also develop a positive attitude towards this economic activity. If the positive attitude does not exist there will be no entrepreneurial intention and no entrepreneurial behaviour. As a consequence, we propose supplementing this optional course with optional activities, supplementing formal entrepreneurial education with nonformal entrepreneurial education. In other words, the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course offers information and develops skills related to the subject. On the other hand, the nonformal means of education applied during the optional entrepreneurial education classes ideally contribute to reaching the attitudinal objective: developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. The optional activities take place at school but they are less rigid, and they are meant to develop the attitudinal component of the entrepreneurial process. Moreover, there are various nonformal means of education used during the optional classes, and so they can be compared and analysed from the point of view of their efficiency in modifying the attitude that the subjects have towards entrepreneurship.

¹www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/6230, accesat la data de 03.12.2014.

Entrepreneurship involves change and innovation, and one of the reasons for which it should be encouraged is the following: what is different is not necessarily better, but what is better is always different (Dauten, 1986 apud. Kuratko, 2005). A positive attitude towards entrepreneurship means that individuals have the desire to exploit opportunities, thus changing the future of the society they are part of by modifying their own view of the role they have in that particular society.

The countries' ability to compete on the international markets and to respond to the existing and imminent challenges depends on how much the educational systems develop skills and encourage lifelong learning. Therefore, it is very important that the economic development strategies are supported by an educational and a training system which offer the society literate individuals but eager to learn more and more. The entrepreneurial talent, and the ability to accumulate, adapt and apply knowledge and technologies represent the key elements for global competitiveness (UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021, p.15²).

Theoretical and empirical objectives

The theoretical objectives of this PHD thesis are cognitive:

- Defining, explaining and exemplifying the following concepts: “entrepreneurship”, “entrepreneur”, “new economy”;
- Identifying and arguing the role of entrepreneurship and of entrepreneurs in the new economy;
- Analysing entrepreneurship at the European and at the national level;
- Identifying and analysing the main factors influencing entrepreneurship;
- Defining, explaining and exemplifying the concepts: “formal education” and “nonformal education”;
- Defining, explaining and exemplifying some nonformal methods of education: The public café, Photovoice, The forum theater, The Disney Strategy and The role play;

²<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002312/231288e.pdf>, accesat la data de 20.11.2014.

- Explaining the link between nonformal education and entrepreneurship.

The empirical objectives of this PHD thesis are attitudinal and psychomotor:

- Evaluating the X grade students' attitude towards entrepreneurship, after going through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course;
- Analysing the impact of some nonformal methods of education on X grade students' attitude towards entrepreneurship;
- Establishing correlations between different nonformal methods of education and X grade students' attitude towards entrepreneurship.

The entrepreneurial knowledge and the competences related to this field of study and of activity are not enough for one to act entrepreneurially. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and modify the factors which determine the entrepreneurial behaviour, in order to activate the latter. Entrepreneurial behaviour is planned, preceded by intentions, these in their turn being determined by attitudes. Taking these into consideration we can say that developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship is necessary for activating the entrepreneurial behaviour.

PART I – A STUDY OF THE LITERATURE SPECIFIC TO THE FIELD OF RESEARCH

The PHD thesis entitled *Improving the Romanian entrepreneurial education by using nonformal methods in highschool* is made of two parts, a theoretical part and an empirical research part. The theoretical part has four chapters, each of them with the necessary subchapters.

In **chapter I** we defined, explained and exemplified the key concepts used in the PHD thesis, namely: “entrepreneurship”, “entrepreneur”, “new economy”, “knowledge economy”. Moreover, we presented a short historical overview of the aforementioned concepts, in order to point out their evolution and their contemporary status. What is more, we explained the importance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs in the new economy, with the purpose of underlining the link between the concepts earlier defined.

In **chapter II** we presented and analysed the situation of the European and of the Romanian entrepreneurship, based on data from GEM and from different studies of the European Union. Both the GEM studies and the European Union studies are available online on official websites which are enumerated in the bibliography.

In **chapter III** we presented and analysed factors which encourage or discourage the entrepreneurial mindset, which influence and determine the entrepreneurial behaviour, without conducting an exhaustive search. Firstly, we defined and explained the term “culture”, its component “national culture”, the latter influencing the entrepreneurial behaviour from the outside, through socially transmitted values. Secondly, we presented the entrepreneurs’ mindset, that particular way of thinking which is the underpinning of individuals acting entrepreneurially.

Chapter IV came as a “solution” for chapter III, presenting ways in which people and institutions try to encourage the entrepreneurial behaviour, thus increasing the number of entrepreneurs. In this chapter we presented an example of formal entrepreneurial education, the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course, structured for X grade highschool students, all types of highschools and all profiles. On the other hand, we argued for the importance and for the efficiency of nonformal education, in this case the optional entrepreneurial education course, which complete the compulsory course without underestimating its value.

Chapter IV is an introduction in the **empirical research**. This part consists of the empirical data which point out if the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course has attitudinal objectives, and if it leads to developing positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Moreover, this part also contains our proposal for entrepreneurial education activities with attitudinal and psychomotor objectives which complete the cognitive objectives of the compulsory course. We analysed how much the nonformal methods of education contribute to the development of a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the nonformal methods of education are put in a hierarchy based on their efficiency in developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship.

PART II – EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON NONFORMAL METHODS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

According to the National education law No. 1/2011, the children, the youth and the grown-ups' education and training aim at developing competences, these being a mixture of knowledge and skills necessary for:

- a) personal satisfaction and development, by reaching one's own objectives in life, according to the individual interest and desire to learn throughout life;
- b) social integration and active citizenship;
- c) getting a job and taking part in the functioning and the development of a durable economy;
- e) promoting such values as dignity, tolerance, respect for individual and human rights;
- f) developing sensitivity for the problems of humanity, for the moral and civic values, for the respect of nature, the natural, social and cultural environment³.

The same official document, in Art.2, paragraph 3, mentions the fact that the educational ideal of the Romanian school consists in the free, integral and harmonious development of individuals, in building independent personalities with a system of values necessary for developing the entrepreneurial spirit, the civic spirit, the individuals thus becoming socially sensitive and eager to enter the labour market. In other words, the educational institutions educate the subjects so that they function efficiently at work, act and react morally in the social environment and have a fruitful personal life. The mission assumed by the law, that of building, through education, the mental infrastructure of the Romanian society, is consonant with the new requirements derived from Romania's status as EU member state. Moreover, it also derives from the need to function efficiently in the global environment and to generate national human resources of great value, capable of functioning in the present and in the future society⁴.

Developing the entrepreneurial spirit is an educational ideal, the entrepreneurial competences are key European competences, as it is presented in the document entitled *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 18 December*

³<http://www.edu.ro/index.php/legaldocs/14847>, accesat la data de 20.01.2015

⁴<http://www.edu.ro/index.php/legaldocs/14847>, accesat la data de 20.01.2015

2006, on key competences for lifelong learning. Entrepreneurship is necessary for a country to be competitive on the global market, it is one of the solutions for decreasing the unemployment level and at the same time increasing the national innovation level. The compulsory course entitled *Entrepreneurial education* was introduced in the national curriculum for highschool students as a measure to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and to increase the number of entrepreneurs.

The empirical research is based on all the aforementioned information and it tries to find simple solutions for stimulating the entrepreneurial spirit, increasing the number of entrepreneurs, increasing the entrepreneurial rate, the innovation rate and the competitiveness rate.

The hypotheses of the empirical research

The hypotheses of the empirical research, established after a logical analysis of the expected results, can be divided into two categories:

- General hypotheses – statements which refer to those results of the research which are not expressed in numerical terms, their validation being made on the basis of a logical analysis of the researcher;
- Statistical hypotheses – statements which refer to those results of the research which target the numerical aspects, with the purpose of identifying correlations between two or more variables (Constantin & Tecău, 2009).

The general hypothesis of the empirical research is the following:

- The entrepreneurial behaviour is influenced by the positive attitude towards entrepreneurship.

The statistical hypotheses of the empirical research are the following:

- *Hypothesis 1:* The students' attitude towards entrepreneurship does not change significantly after going through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course.
- *Hypothesis 2:* The students' intention towards entrepreneurship does not change significantly after going through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course.

- *Hypothesis 3:* The nonformal methods of education, applied in the context of entrepreneurial education, determine a change in the students' attitude towards entrepreneurship.
- *Hypothesis 4:* The nonformal methods of education, applied in the context of entrepreneurial education, determine a change in the students' intentions towards entrepreneurship.
- *Hypothesis 5:* The five nonformal methods of education applied in the context of entrepreneurial education do not have the same efficiency in changing the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship.
- *Hypothesis 6:* The five nonformal methods of education applied in the context of entrepreneurial education do not have the same efficiency in changing the students' intentions towards entrepreneurship.

The objectives of the empirical research

Based on the literature of the domain, taking into consideration the fact that developing the entrepreneurial spirit in an educational ideal, and starting from the hypotheses mentioned above, the purpose of the empirical research is that of identifying didactic strategies used by the educational institutions in order to contribute to developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. In this context, we will state the objectives of the empirical research:

- Analysing the students' attitude towards entrepreneurship, at the beginning and at the end of the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course, for those in the control group.
- Analysing the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship, at the beginning and at the end of the optional entrepreneurial education course where nonformal methods of education were used, for those in the five experimental groups.
- Comparing the nonformal methods of education, in the context of the entrepreneurial education, from the point of view of developing a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship.

The methodology of the empirical research

In order to test the aforementioned hypotheses, and starting from the objectives enumerated above, we established the didactic strategy to be applied for the empirical research; the didactic strategy is an actionable and operational undertaking, coordinated with and consonant with the objectives and the situations, involving teaching and learning and determining attitude and behaviour change in different didactic contexts (Cucoş, 2002, p.282). The didactic strategy that we used, with the three main components, will be presented in what follows. The methods or the procedural resources, the means which include the the material and the human resources, as well as the class organization have been adapted to the field of research, namely the entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial education.

Methods or procedural resources

Studying the etymology of the term “method” we see that it comes from two Greek words, “odos”, which means “path”, and “metha”, which means “towards” (Cucoş, 2002, p.286). Therefore, the methods represent the paths to be taken in order to reach the initial objectives. Throughout the empirical research we used formal and nonformal methods of education, in the context of entrepreneurial education. During the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* classes various formal methods of education were used, such as: lecturing, the heuristic conversation, the didactic demonstration, the didactic observation, brainstorming etc. These methods do not represent the object of the empirical research and this is why we did not describe them in chapter IV. These methods were applied on the control group. On the other hand, in the subchapter 4.5.1 we described five nonformal methods of education: the Public café, Photovoice, the Forum theatre, the Disney strategy and the Roleplay. Each of these nonformal methods was applied to one of the five experimental group

Means

The main material resource used in the empirical research was the questionnaire entitled “Entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of university students”, EIQ, version 2.05, obtained, translated, adapted and applied with the authors’ approval, F. Liñan și M.J. Rodriguez.

„The research questionnaire represents a technique and an investigation instrument, consisting of a number of written questions and maybe graphic images, logically and psychologically organised, which can be implemented by the researchers and by the subjects' themselves, and which requires answers that will be written down (Chelcea, 2001, p.177).

The EIQ questionnaire and its scale represents a standard measure instrument for entrepreneurial intentions and its antecedents. EIQ has resulted from the integrated approach of entrepreneurial psychology and literature. According to the authors, the hypotheses that were tested through the EIQ questionnaire, that were confirmed through the studies, and that gave the questionnaire and the scale a patent are the following:

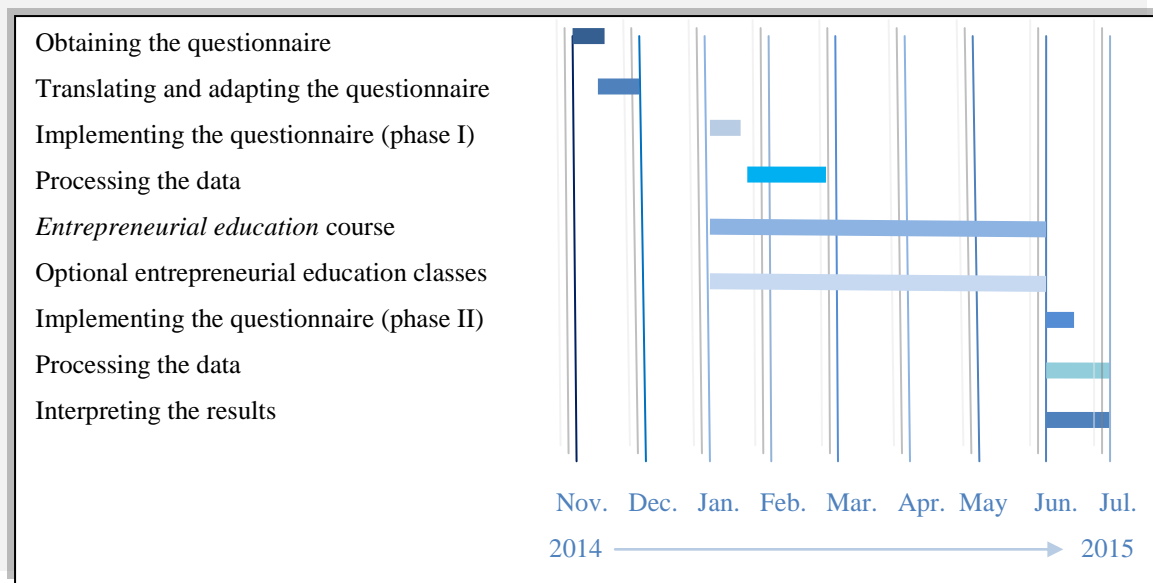
- The personal attitude positively influences entrepreneurial intentions.
- The perceived behavioral control positively influences entrepreneurial intentions.
- The subjective norm positively influences the entrepreneurial intentions.
- The subjective norm positively influences the personal attitude.
- The subjective norm positively influences the perceived behavioral control.
- The subjective norm has a greater effect on personal attitudes and on perceived behavioral control in countries with a low level of individualism.
- The relative effect that the personal attitude and the perceived behavioral control have on entrepreneurial intentions differ from one country to the other (Liñán & Chen, 2009, p.599).

The EIQ scale was divided into nine sections: education and work experience, entrepreneurial knowledge, entrepreneurial attraction, social valuation, entrepreneurial capacity, entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial objectives, entrepreneurial education, personal data. Each of these sections has its own questions, the questionnaire as a whole being presented as annexe in the PHD thesis.

The human resources involved in the empirical research, the subjects in the control and in the experimental groups, were X grade students. There were 141 subjects involved in the empirical research, students who answered the questionnaire twice, at

approximately one semester distance. In this interval the control group went through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course, and the experimental groups went through the optional entrepreneurial education classes. In the PHD thesis the two moments in which the questionnaire was implemented are named t_1 și t_2 . We mention the fact that in t_1 the subjects already have minimal entrepreneurial education knowledge, being after about 10 classes of *Entrepreneurial education*. The time frame of the empirical research is presented in the Gantt chart.

Chart. 5.1. The Gantt chart reflecting the time frame of the empirical research



The data is presented from 5 points of view: (1) the average of answers in t_1 , for each group and for the whole sample group, (2) the average of answers in t_2 , for each group and for the whole sample group, (3) the difference between the average of answers in t_2 and the average of answers in t_1 , for each group and for the whole sample group, (4) the correlation matrix for the answers in t_1 , (5) the correlation matrix for the answers in t_2 .

In what concerns the comparative analysis of the answers in phase I and phase II, this is in fact the difference between the values in t_2 and the values in t_1 . There are three possible results when comparing the average in t_2 with the average in t_1 :

- The answers have the same average – numerically expressed by 0. (There is no evolution.)

- The average in t_2 is higher than the average in t_1 – numerically expressed by a positive number. (Positive evolution)
- The average in t_2 is lower than the average in t_1 – numerically expressed by a negative number. (Negative evolution)

In what concerns the correlation matrix we can say the following: it helps us understand the way in which one variable influences another, even if it is well known that a correlation does not always represent a causality relationship. The correlations are valid and invalid, the threshold value being 0.05. In other words, the correlations whose Sig. is higher than 0.05 are not statistically significant.

The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and the direction of a linear relationship between two variables. The correlations can be positive, the higher A the higher B, or they can be negative, the higher A the lower B. Based on the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient we have the following types of correlations:

- Pearson Correlation $< 0,3$ - small correlation;
- Pearson Correlation between 0,3 and 0,7 - medium correlation;
- Pearson Correlation $> 0,7$ - big correlation.

In what follows we will present the empirical research hypotheses again, this time with the data and the analyses which validate or invalidate them.

- ✓ *Hypothesis 1:* The students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship does not change significantly after going through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course.

The subjects who take part only in the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course are those in the control group. In order to test hypothesis 1 we bring the following statistical arguments:

- In the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, meaning at the beginning and at the end of the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course, the idea of becoming an entrepreneur does not become more attractive, the average for the item 6.3 being 3,35 in t_1 and in t_2 . (Item 6.3. In the medium and longer term, considering all advantages and disadvantages -economic, personal, social recognition, labour stability, and so

on- indicate your level of attraction towards entrepreneurship.)

- In t_2 , at the end of the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course*, item 20.3 positively correlates with item 6.1, the positive value of the Pearson correlation coefficient being .280. The more entrepreneurial knowledge the subjects acquire, throughout the aforementioned course, the more attractive the idea of becoming an employee becomes. It seems that the cognitive aspects regarding entrepreneurship discourage the potential entrepreneurs, and they prefer to become employees.

Hypothesis 1 is valid. In other words, after the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course* the subjects do not become more interested in an entrepreneurial career, they become more attracted to the idea of becoming an employee.

- ✓ *Hypothesis 2*: The students' intention to become entrepreneurs does not change significantly after going through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course*.

The subjects who take part only in the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course* are those in the control group. In order to test hypothesis 2 we bring the following statistical arguments:

- In the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, at the beginning and at the end of the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course*, the students' intention to start a business if they had the opportunity and the necessary resources decreases, the average for item 7.3 being 3,20 in t_1 și 3,00 in t_2 . The compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course* makes the subjects less eager to materialize their entrepreneurial intentions. (Item 7.3. Indicate your level of agreement with the following idea: If I had the opportunity and the necessary resources I would start a business.)
- In the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, at the beginning and at the end of the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course*, the students' intention to start a business at a certain point in the future decreases, the average for the item 14.6 being 2,15 in t_1 și 2,10 in t_2 . The compulsory *Entrepreneurial education course* makes the subjects less eager to materialize their entrepreneurial intentions. (Item 14.6. Indicate your level of agreement with the following idea: I have serious intentions to start a business at a certain point in the future.)

Hypothesis 2 is valid. The student's intention to become entrepreneurs decreases in value in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, maybe because the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course is more a theoretical subject than a practical exercise.

- *Hypothesis 3*: The nonformal methods of education applied at the optional entrepreneurial education classes determines a change in the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

The subjects who take part only in the optional entrepreneurial education classes are those in the experimental groups. In order to test hypothesis 3 we bring the following statistical arguments:

- The groups: Forum theatre, Disney strategy and Role play record an increase of the average for item 5.2, in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, so the desire to start a business right after graduation increases. The nonformal methods of education applied during the optional entrepreneurial education classes made the subjects in these groups more and more eager to start a business right after graduation. (Item 5.2. Evaluate your desire to start a business right after graduation.)
- The Role play group records an increase of the average for item 6.3, in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, so the attractiveness of the entrepreneurial option increases, due to the nonformal method of education applied during the optional entrepreneurial education classes. (Item 6.3. In the medium and longer term, considering all advantages and disadvantages -economic, personal, social recognition, labour stability, and so on- indicate your level of attraction towards entrepreneurship.)
- The groups: Forum theatre and Role play record an increase of the average for items 7.2 and 7.5, in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, so the attractiveness of the entrepreneurial career and the preference to become entrepreneur increase, due to the nonformal methods of education applied during the optional entrepreneurial education classes. (Item 7.2. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Entrepreneurship is an attractive career for me./ Item 7.5. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Among various options I'd rather be an entrepreneur.)
- The groups: Forum theatre, Photovoice, Disney strategy and Role play record an increase of the average for item 14.2, in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, so the subjects become more and more convinced that entrepreneurship is their career choice.

The change is due to the nonformal methods of education applied during the optional entrepreneurial education classes. (Item 14.2. Indicate your level of agreement with the following idea: My professional ideal is to become an entrepreneur.)

- All the five experimental groups: the Public café, the Forum theatre, Photovoice, the Disney strategy and the Role play record an increase of the average for item 20.5, in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, so there is an increase of student's preference to become entrepreneurs, due to the nonformal methods of education applied during the optional entrepreneurial education classes. (Item 20.5. To what extent did the course help you develop your preference to become entrepreneurs?)
- In t_2 , so at the end of the optional entrepreneurial education classes where nonformal methods of education were applied, item 20.5 positively correlates with items 5.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5 and 14.2, the values of the Pearson coefficient being .251, .329, .230, .338, .353, .307 and .367. The subjects taking part in the optional entrepreneurial education courses which helped them develop their preference to become entrepreneurs became more and more eager to start their own business right after graduation, more and more attracted to the entrepreneurial option, more and more convinced that this involves more advantages than disadvantages, more and more convinced that this would offer them more satisfactions, and thus made from entrepreneurship their professional goal.

Hypothesis 3 is valid. Due to the optional entrepreneurial education classes and to the nonformal methods of education applied the subjects in the experimental groups developed a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship.

- *Hypothesis 4:* The nonformal methods of education applied at the entrepreneurial education determine a change in the students' intentions towards entrepreneurship.

The subjects who take part only in the optional entrepreneurial education classes are those in the experimental groups. In order to test hypothesis 4 we bring the following statistical arguments:

- The groups: Forum theatre, Disney strategy and Role play record an increase of

the average for items 14.3, 14.4 și 14.6, in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, so there is an increase in the students' intention to do their best to start and run their own business, their determination to start a business in the future, the intentions becoming more and more serious, due to the nonformal methods of education applied at the optional entrepreneurial education classes. (Item 14.3. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I will make every effort to start and run my own firm. / Item 14.4. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I am determined to start a business in the future. / Item 14.6. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I have serious intentions to start a business at a certain point in the future.)

- All five groups: the Public café, the Forum theatre, Photovoice, the Disney strategy and the Role play record an increase of the average for item 20.7, in the $t_1 - t_2$ interval, so the optional entrepreneurial education classes where nonformal methods of education were applied made the subjects develop their entrepreneurial intention. (Item 20.7. To what extent did the course help you develop your entrepreneurial intention?)
- In t_2 , at the end of the optional entrepreneurial education classes, item 20.7 positively correlates with items 7.3, 14.3, 14.4, 14.5 and 14.6, the positive values of the Pearson coefficient being: .341, .360, .430, .402 and .486. The subjects who took part in the optional entrepreneurial education classes which helped them develop their entrepreneurial intention became more and more convinced of the fact that they would start a business if they had the opportunity and the necessary resources, more and more determined to make every effort to start and run their own business, the intentions becoming more and more serious.

Hypothesis 4 is valid. At the end of the optional entrepreneurial education classes where nonformal methods of education were applied the subjects in the experimental groups develop their entrepreneurial intention.

- ✓ *Hypothesis 5*: The five nonformal methods of education applied in the context of the entrepreneurial education do not have the same efficiency in changing the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

The subjects who take part only in the optional entrepreneurial education classes are those in the experimental groups. In order to test hypothesis 5 we bring the following statistical arguments:

- Item 20.5 indicates the extent to which the optional entrepreneurial education classes where nonformal methods of education were applied contributed to changing the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. According to the average values, representing the difference between the average in t_2 and the average in t_1 , the decreasing hierarchy of the efficiency of the nonformal methods of education in changing the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship is the following: the Role play method, the Forum theatre method, the Photovoice method, the Public café method and the Disney strategy method.

Hypothesis 5 is valid. At the end of the optional entrepreneurial education classes where nonformal methods of education were applied the subjects in the experimental groups develop more or less a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship.

- ✓ *Hypothesis 6:* The five nonformal methods of education applied in the context of the entrepreneurial education do not have the same efficiency in changing the students' intentions towards entrepreneurship.

The subjects who take part only in the optional entrepreneurial education classes are those in the experimental groups. In order to test hypothesis 6 we bring the following statistical arguments:

- Item 20.7 indicates the extent to which the optional entrepreneurial education classes where nonformal methods of education were applied contributed to changing the students' intentions towards entrepreneurship. According to the average values, representing the difference between the average in t_2 and the average in t_1 , the decreasing hierarchy of the efficiency of the nonformal methods of education in changing the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship is the following: the Forum theatre method, the Role play method, the Photovoice method, the Public café method and the Disney strategy method.

Hypothesis 6 is valid. At the end of the optional entrepreneurial education classes where nonformal methods of education were applied the subjects in the experimental groups develop more or less their entrepreneurial intentions.

In conclusion, both the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course and the optional entrepreneurial education classes contribute to changing students' attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurship. However, according to the average values, representing the difference between the average values in t₂ and the average values in t₁, we notice that the subjects in the control group record the lowest values, so their attitudes and intentions change the least. This is because they only go through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course, whose contents are cognitive rather than attitudinal or psychomotor. In this context, the optional entrepreneurial education classes and the nonformal methods of education complete the compulsory course, without underestimating its value.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Both the theoretical part, namely the literature specific to the field of research, and the empirical research of this PHD thesis contribute to reaching the main objective: identifying a didactic strategy which contributes to the development of a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, the attitude being an antecedent of intention, and the intention determining the entrepreneurial behaviour.

In order for the Lisbon Strategy regarding the increase of the number of jobs and the decrease of the unemployment rate to be successful, Europe must stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit among young people, encourage the foundation of innovative businesses and promote a more favorable culture for entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium enterprises (European Commission, 2009⁵). Education has an important role in promoting entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours, starting with primary school and going through all the rest of the school years.

⁵http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/smes/vocational/entr_voca_ro.pdf, accesat la data de 20.10.2014

Education and professional training have an important role in reaching the “Europe 2020” strategy, that of an intelligent, inclusive and durable economic development, because it offers the citizens the knowledge and competences the European society and the European economy need in order to remain innovative and competitive, and to promote social cohesion and inclusion.

Entrepreneurial education consists of all the activities meant to stimulate and entrepreneurial mindset, an entrepreneurial attitude, but also personal skills necessary for identifying business opportunities, for starting, running and innovating a business.

Starting from the objectives of the PHD thesis, studying the literature related to the field of research and based on the empirical research, we could notice the following:

- Entrepreneurship is essential in the new economy, the knowledge economy, because of the social dimension of consumption;
- Entrepreneurship is firstly a mindset, then a planned behaviour, and then an economic activity;
- The entrepreneurial mindset is developed through formal, nonformal and informal education;
- The attitude towards entrepreneurship determines the entrepreneurial intentions and then the entrepreneurial behaviour;
- The compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course focuses, through its contents and the corresponding competences, on the cognitive component of the entrepreneurial process;
- The nonformal methods of education, applied in the context of the entrepreneurial education, contribute to reaching the attitudinal and psychomotor objectives of the entrepreneurial process.

The results of the empirical research, detailed in subchapter 5.2.2 of the PHD thesis, can be a suggestion for restructuring the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course. In order to determine, ideally speaking, an entrepreneurial behaviour among young people, it is necessary to develop the entrepreneurial intention based on a positive attitude towards this process. Therefore, supplementing the compulsory course focused on the cognitive aspects of the entrepreneurial process with optional classes focused on

the attitudinal component of the entrepreneurial process is important, none of them being superior to the other. Ideally speaking, the number of young entrepreneurs will increase, as well as the entrepreneurial rate, this being the practical purpose of the entrepreneurial education.

Personal contributions

The interest shown in the theme is based on my direct relationship with the educational system, I myself being a teacher, and on the existence of Erasmus+ projects in schools in general, and also in the school where I work.

In order to elaborate an Erasmus+ project, and in order for it to be accepted, it is necessary that it focuses on key aspects of the European economic and social environment. According to the Erasmus+ program guide the European business environment needs to become more competitive through talent and innovation, a challenge in this direction being the development of the initiative spirit and of the entrepreneurial spirit. Thus, the trans-curricular skills (entrepreneurial, digital, linguistic) should be developed through each program and activity.

In this context, based on the literature related to the field of research we defined and explained entrepreneurship, presenting the etymology of the concept and its evolution up to the contemporary moment. Then, based on information from different articles in the international databases we presented the relationship between the new economy, the knowledge economy, and the entrepreneurial process. Thirdly, using information from articles in the field of management, sociology, psychology we studied entrepreneurship from various points of view, trying to underline some of the factors influencing it. In the same context, we studied documents of the European Union and we presented the complementarity and/or causality relationships between them, focusing on the importance of entrepreneurship at the European and at the national level, its status at the European and at the national level, and measures that need to be taken in order to modify this status. Based on the analysis of the national curriculum for the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course, noticing that this course only has cognitive objectives, but keeping in mind that the attitudinal components are important as well, as

shown in the literature related to the field of research, we have come with the proposal for the empirical research.

The main personal theoretical contributions can be summarised as follows:

- we defined key concepts such as: entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, new economy, entrepreneurial education, formal education, nonformal education etc.;
- we analysed the etymology of the term “entrepreneur”, the evolution of the concept and its status in the contemporary period;
- we identified the link between the key concepts: entrepreneurship and the new economy;
- we described the European and the national status of entrepreneurship, using documents from various literatures;
- we enumerated and we explained factors influencing entrepreneurship;
- we enumerated and we explained nonformal methods of education;

In the empirical research we put in a relationship the EIQ scale, a patent instrument, and the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course. Then, we did the same thing with the optional entrepreneurial education course, each time testing the designed hypotheses. We proved the fact that the attitudes and the intentions of the subjects in the control group, those who go only through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course change the least, compared to those of the subjects in the experimental groups, on which nonformal methods of education have been applied. The results can be used in order to change the structure of the national curriculum for the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course, in the sense of completing it with contents which focus on the attitudinal aspects of the entrepreneurial process.

The main personal empirical contributions are shown by the results of the research, described in chapter V of the PHD thesis. Through the empirical research we demonstrated the validity of the six hypotheses:

- we demonstrated that the students’ attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurship do not change after going through the compulsory *Entrepreneurial education* course.

- we demonstrated that the nonformal methods of education applied in the context of the entrepreneurial education determine a change of the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship, and of their intention to become entrepreneurs;
- we demonstrated that the nonformal methods of education applied in the context of entrepreneurial education do not have the same efficiency in changing the students' attitude towards entrepreneurship and their intention to become entrepreneurs.

Limits of the empirical research and future research perspectives

The most important limits of the empirical research are the following:

- In the research we used only one instrument for measuring the students' attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurship, the EIQ scale.
- In the research we used only five nonformal methods of education, and we distributed them randomly to the five experimental groups.
- Because there were only 141 subjects involved we did not point out the influence of the following control variables: age, sex, number of family members, father's job, mother's job, social status.
- We did not take into account the quality and the quantity of the teachers' skills, for neither of the two courses, compulsory or optional.

Future research perspectives

Starting from this PHD thesis, but also keeping in mind its limits, one can consider the following future research perspectives:

- Measuring the subjects' attitudes and intentions using more patent instruments, in order to test the hypotheses in more ways;
- Designing a new instrument for measuring attitudes towards entrepreneurship, specific for the highschool entrepreneurial education courses;
- Applying more nonformal methods of education to each experimental group; one method may not have results on one group but it may have results on another, the conclusions referring to the efficiency of the method thus being better justified.

The ethics of the research

The theoretical part of this PHD thesis consists of information from the literature related to the field of research, as well as personal analyses, where necessary quoting or making references to authors and sources.

The patent instrument used in the empirical research, the EIQ scale, was obtained, translated, adapted and implemented with the authors' agreement.

As regards the empirical research, the ethical aspects that need to be pointed out are the following:

- Respecting the confidentiality and the anonymity of the respondents;
- Ensuring the voluntary participation in the study and the right to draw back from the study;
- Protecting the confidentiality of the data;
- Ensuring that the researcher is objective.

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