

Promotion Of Entrepreneurship Education In Engineering Colleges: A Case Study Of Tirunelveli District

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Abstract: Support for entrepreneurship has never been more important than it is now. Education is argued to be an important driver of the decision to start a business. Reinforcing entrepreneurial education in schools, vocational education institutions and universities will have a positive impact on the entrepreneurial dynamism of our economies. Indeed, besides contributing to the creation of social enterprise and business start-ups, entrepreneurship education will make young people more employable and more 'intrapreneurial' in their work within existing organisations, across the social, public and private sectors. Therefore investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments in developing countries like India. However, the measurement of its influence is difficult since it is considered to be an endogenous variable. The aim of this paper is to show how entrepreneurship education will empower the entrepreneurship traits of engineering students. The researcher used survey and questioner methods to support her statements and collected the engineering college students' attitude towards this kind of courses in their degree curriculum. It alarms the need of such education and proposes a challenge to the academic community to take favourable steps in bring this dream into fact.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Engineering Colleges, Tirunelveli District, India.

1. Introduction

Governments and local communities across the world have recognized that key to building prosperity and stimulate regional growth is fostering entrepreneurship among their people especially youth. Youth entrepreneurship has become a topic of interest for research scholars and also a subject of major concern for the Governments. Promoting youth entrepreneurship will not only help in reducing unemployment but more importantly make young people understand that they have alternatives to create their own destiny by starting their own companies and they need not keep waiting to get a job. But there is a gap between education and economy and include external experts in their teaching; focusing on real-life experiences. The researcher conducted a case study of promotion of entrepreneurship education in engineering colleges in Tirunelveli district, the down south district of Tamilnadu, India with the aim of showing how entrepreneurship education will empower the entrepreneurship traits of engineering students. The researcher used surveyed the attitude of the engineering college students towards entrepreneurship courses in their degree curriculum. It alarms the need of such education and proposes a challenge to the academic community to take favourable steps in bring this dream into fact.

2. ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Entrepreneurship has been a buzzword, especially among young people between the ages of 18-34 (Chen & Lai, 2010). Number of scholars defines entrepreneurship differently. However, 'entrepreneurship is a process integrating

opportunity, resources and people/the entrepreneurs', (Timmons & Spinelli, 2009). In general, it is said that, if you want to be an entrepreneur, you need to learn 'how' first. They have recognized the various benefits of starting-up new businesses. According to Badulescu and Dodescu (2010), the motivations for business start-ups among potential entrepreneurs are driven mostly by the 'self-achievement desire', 'need for more money' and 'desire for a higher social and professional status'. Today, business organizations and government institutions have hailed the value of entrepreneurship and its roles in socio-cultural and economic development. Scholars, (Veciana, Aponte, & Urbano, University students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship: A two countries comparison, 2005) affirm, college students are the most promising sources of entrepreneurship. So the Universities are the places where new-fangled knowledge is created and disseminated. It is not a distant scenario that the college students are expected to start entrepreneurial work during or after their college education. Thus these universities should lay and consolidate the foundation of new firms and enterprises.

3. PROBLEM DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION

Education in Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu is highly advanced and for this reason the district is also known as the 'Oxford of South India'. The district of Tirunelveli has a large number of educational institutions both in the government and the private sector. There are two universities, about twenty five

arts and science colleges, one medical college, Government Siddha medical college, twenty engineering colleges, one law college, about two hundred and forty one pre-primary schools, about one thousand five hundred and one primary schools, four hundred and thirty one middle schools, one hundred and fourteen high schools, one hundred and eighty five higher secondary schools and about twenty eight teachers' training institutes. In 2011, Tirunelveli had population of 3,077,233 of which male and female were 1,520,912 and 1,556,321 respectively. The average literacy rate of Tirunelveli in 2011 were 82.50 % whereas Male literates are 1,210,710 and of Female 1,062,747 (Census, 2011).

Anna University, one of the excellent Technical University of the southern part of India and oversees the management of 74 constituent colleges in four different districts namely Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari. It has 21 affiliated engineering colleges in the native district alone. It provides excellent technical education in the field of Engineering and Management and focuses to groom competent professionals in engineering and technology through learning and research. It has with it, an excellent board of mentors who can inspire hope, ignite the imagination and instil a love for learning, making the university an optimum place for engineering education. According to the district handbook for the year 2011- 2012, this university houses 73666 engineering students of which 29226 are male and 44440 are female students.

4. METHODOLOGY

Methods play a major role in research. This study has adopted the survey method and descriptive research design. The population of the study consists of the entire set of student population in the Engineering colleges of Tirunelveli district. According to the statistical data from Anna University, Tirunelveli, a total of 35076 students are studying in various affiliated engineering colleges in the native district. A total of 1357 respondents of the survey region have been covered as the sample. Data were gathered using a self-administered questionnaire prepared especially for these purpose and personnel interviews with the students. These questions brought a wealth of information to the researchers.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among 35076 students of Theni district, 1800 students have been considered as the population of the survey. But 1357 students only answered the queries and they are considered as the sample of the study where as 74.69 % are male students and 25.31 % are female students. 34.21 per cent are of Below 20 years old, 45.20 per cent are in the range of 20 - 23 years and 20.59 % are in 23.1-25 years old. 44.68 % of the sample is doing their post-graduation in engineering and 55.32 % of them are doing under graduation studies. 29.64 per cent sample's father is self-employed and 17.32 % sample's mother is self-employed. 31.06 % of the samples already have working experience in small or large concerns but 63.70 % does not possess any working experiences.

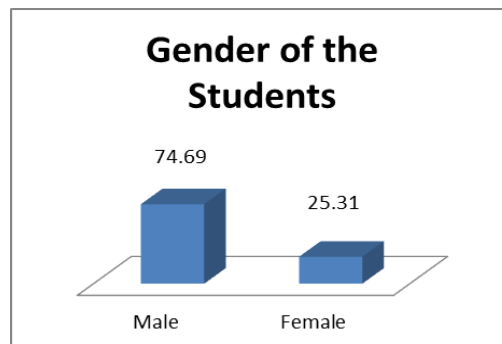
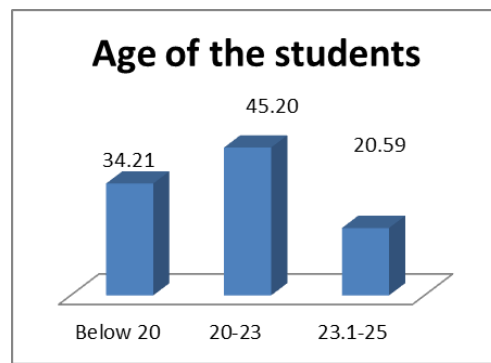


Figure 1: Age and Gender Analysis of the study

5.1. Starting their own Business: Their answers to the preliminary questions are amazing. The researcher asked the students to know their willingness to planning for opening a new venture in their life. They were asked whether they like someday to start their own business or Prefer to work in a big organization rather than a small firm. Many of them feel to start their own business instead of going to some white collar jobs in multi-national companies. They demonstrate a need to achieve, a willingness to exploit a challenge, to persevere, to work hard and driven by self-belief, but tempered with the ability to be flexible and to delegate to others when necessary as well as willingness to listen to advice and to recognize that they are not experts in every aspect of their business. The youth of today have a desire for a higher social and professional status. The result analysis is given in Figure 2.

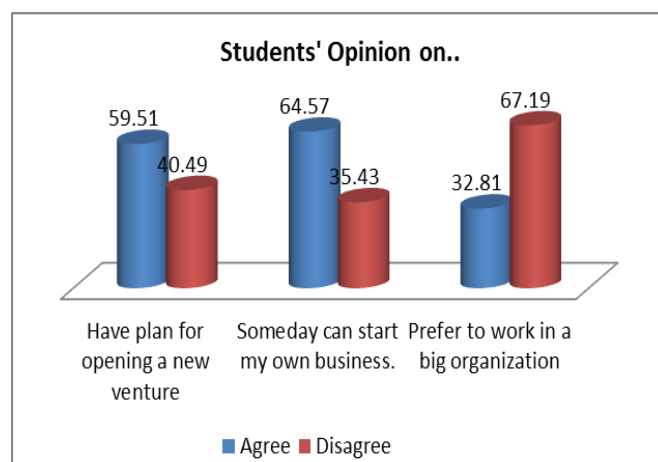


Figure 2: Students' opinion Analysis of starting a new business

5.2 Collecting Business related information: The researcher put forth another query about the source of business-related information. Very little per cent of the sample is come to know

these information from their family members and it is a good sign that many come across this knowledge from their faculty members. So the engineering college students of Tirunelveli district are very well aware of the updates going on the business world.

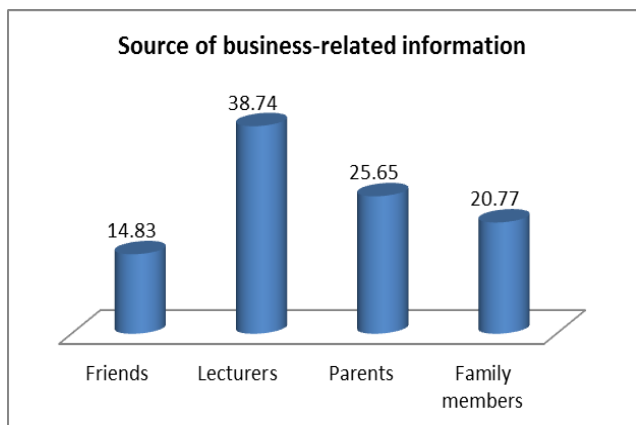


Figure 3: Analysis of source of business related information

5.3. Attitudes towards Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship is an employment strategy that can lead people to lead a life of economic self-sufficiency. From the survey, the researchers identified the favourable attitudes of the engineering college students of Tirunelveli district toward entrepreneurship. The researcher has given five options for the selection. The students any one option among the set of answers strongly agree, Agree, Neither, Disagree and strongly disagree. When the researcher asked the opinion of the students about entrepreneurship as a highly desirable career option, an option for job creation and is an honourable profession, they received the following answer which is given in figure 4.

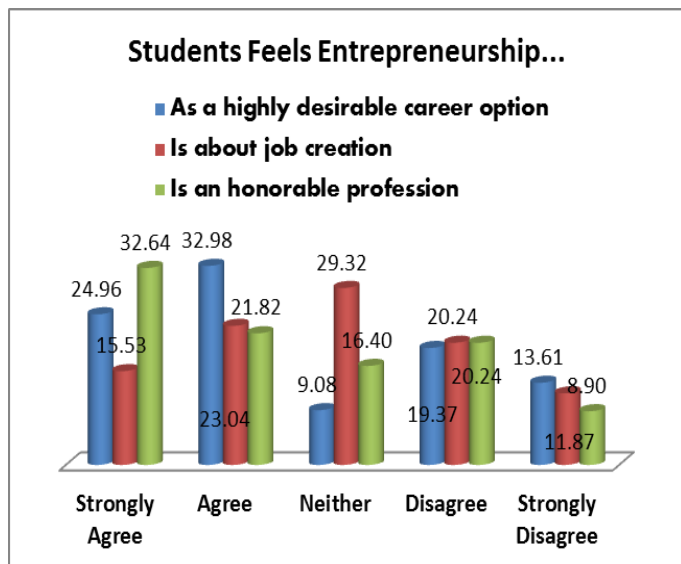


Figure 4: Analysis of Attitudes towards Entrepreneurship

5.4. Attitudes towards attending or obtaining a college degree: Another question asked in the survey is the attitudes towards attending or obtaining a college degree before starting his / her own business. Many students of these engineering colleges have respected the people who are entrepreneurs. They feel if they we familiar with the entrepreneurship skills or if there would have trained with such skills as part of their

curriculum, it will definitely helpful to enhanced business skills and knowledge and has been helpful in business. It is their long term wish to create a new educational approach to sustainable development in the entrepreneurship literature (F. Lourenço, O. Jones, D. Jayawarna,2012).

Entrepreneurship education offers a solution to the students those who are coming from a economically poor background. It seeks to prepare these youth to be responsible for their life, decisions and the risk they are to be taken. It enterprise individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real life learning experiences where they can take risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes. It is evident that through entrepreneurship education, youngsters learn organizational skills, including time management, leadership development and interpersonal skills, all of which are highly transferable skills sought by employers. The other positive outcomes of the study include: improved academic performance, college attendance and educational attainment; increased problem-solving and decision-making abilities; improved interpersonal relationships, teamwork, money management, and public speaking skills and job readiness; enhanced social psychological development (self-esteem, ego development, self-efficacy), and perceived improved health status. The result of the study is presented in the figure 5.

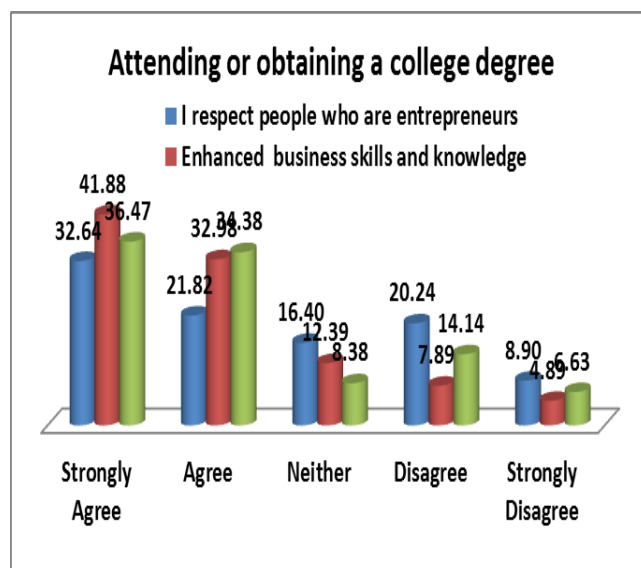


Figure 5: Analysis of Attitudes towards attending or obtaining a college degree

The researcher proposes to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of these degrees in entrepreneurship. Students of this down south district of Tamilnadu, India expressed that these kind of degrees are helpful to identify problems in business. When they are to make necessary changes in business, it will be useful and gives a better chance of success and growth. When they have participated in entrepreneurship courses, there is a significant increase in their interest in attending college, occupational aspirations, independent reading, leadership behavior and belief that attaining one's goals is within one's control. This is presented in Figure 6.

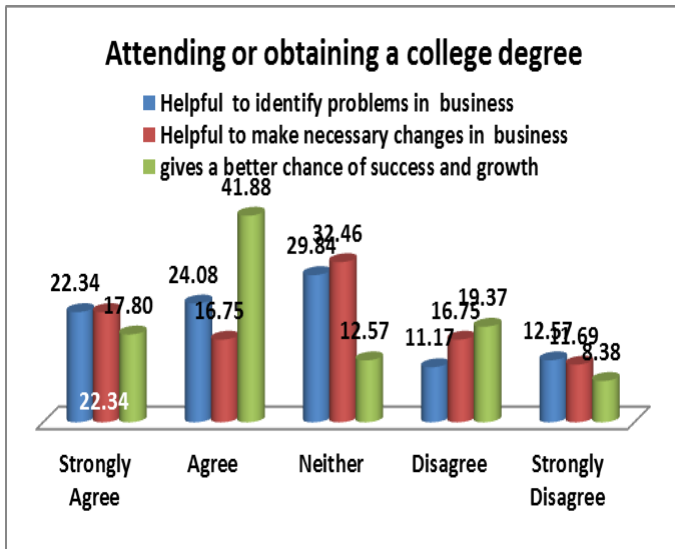


Figure 6: Analysis of Attitudes towards attending entrepreneurship courses

6. CONCLUSION

The development and promotion of entrepreneurship have been strategic objectives of any developing country. Building of a stronger culture of entrepreneurship and 'entrepreneurial mindsets' of its citizens, particularly young people is the key feature for the development. These entrepreneurs are inspirational, open-minded and confident, flexible and responsible - but also one cannot refuse that they are the rule-breakers. The researcher takes this entrepreneurship trait among the young minds of engineering colleges of down south district of Tamilnadu, India and made a case study out of it. From her case study, she has proved that if the entrepreneurship courses have been given in the college level curriculum, it will be an opportunity for Work Based Experiences. It will be helpful to exercise leadership and develop interpersonal skills. It develops planning, financial literacy, and money management skills among the youth. So she suggests incorporating such courses in the curriculum and alarms the academic community to concentrate this kind of education which will bring India into the top tiers of development and sustainability.

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