

## The pivotal role of higher education in fostering entrepreneurial spirit among the youth. Case study : Oran University

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### Abstract:

The objective of this paper is to ascertain the pivotal role of Algerian universities in fostering an entrepreneurial culture among graduating students, given that they are seeking employment and integrating into the professional world. Following the refinement of the conceptual framework of the concept of entrepreneurial culture, the importance of entrepreneurial education at the university level was highlighted, as well as the distinction between the traditional concept of the university and the entrepreneurial university and its requirements. In the field study, we conducted an interview with students of the third-year licence option in entrepreneurship at the University of Oran. In order to process the research problem, we employed a number of statistical tools to analyse their responses and viewpoints. Finally, we achieved a series of results, the most significant of which was the adaptation of academic formation through vocational training. This enables students to develop the administrative, technical and scientific skills required to manage their entrepreneurial projects. Recommendations were proposed to foster an entrepreneurial culture among students.

**Keywords:** University, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial University, Entrepreneurial Education, Entrepreneurial Culture

**Jel classification codes :** L26, M13.

### 1. Introduction :

The contemporary world is witnessing a multitude of dynamic and immense developments across a range of fields, largely because of the rapid scientific and informational flow. The

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advancement of science has become a vital instrument for nations to attain progress, prosperity, and achieve the status of a knowledge-based economy, which is dependent on information and communication technology. Moreover, the economies are increasingly focusing on human capital, with the objective of economic development. This is particularly evident in light of modern theories that emphasise the centrality of the individual as the main driver of the developmental process and its goal. In this context, the higher education system has placed a particular emphasis on the individual, namely the student. The university institution, through scientific research and research centres, has become a key driver of the national economy. Furthermore, countries allocate considerable financial resources to fund scientific research and support academic projects, recognising their pivotal role in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness, improving processes, and their impact on various aspects, including political, economic, and social domains. In this context, the objective of this research paper is to address the following issue: ***To what extent has the university been able to foster the development of entrepreneurial culture among students, thereby encouraging them to engage in the establishment of small projects?***

In order to address this issue, the following hypothesis was formulated: *The University encourages students to establish their own projects by developing an entrepreneurial culture.*

The importance of this study lies in instilling initiative and activating distinguished capabilities, discovering innovative skills, and increasing the likelihood of crystallizing innovative ideas that contribute to creating emerging business projects. This, in turn, fosters the creation of leaders, increases business success opportunities related to the cognitive orientation, wealth creation, capital accumulation, and employment absorption. Moreover, it contributes to the production of goods and services to serve the community and the national economy by young entrepreneurs and creative students.

The objective of this research is to ascertain the contributions of the university in developing an entrepreneurial culture among students, and to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in cultivating entrepreneurial students who are equipped to successfully establish their own ventures.

In order to verify the hypothesis previously formulated, the work was divided into two distinct sections. In the initial section, we presented the conceptual framework of the university, outlining its objectives and functions, we discussed entrepreneurial culture in terms of concepts and dimensions. In the second axis, we discussed the contributions of the university in developing entrepreneurial culture among students. To address this issue, we conducted a study of entrepreneurship students at the University of Oran, as they are about

to graduate and integrate into the labour market. This study aimed to measure the degree of instilling entrepreneurial culture in them from the first year of their university studies. This was achieved through the utilisation of a set of statistical tools, including the mean and T-test, to test the hypothesis utilising the SPSS statistical program.

## **2. Entrepreneurial culture : Concepts and dimensions :**

### ***2.1 Entrepreneurship definition:***

Entrepreneurship is the activity of establishing a new project or business that offers something new or creates or innovates an economic or administrative activity by efficiently managing resources with distinctive capabilities and bearing associated risks to maximize the value of the outcomes achieved. According to Gartner, entrepreneurship is the stages leading to the creation of a new organization (Sayed Abdel Ati Al-Sayed, 2003). From this perspective, entrepreneurship is a set of stages leading to the creation of an enterprise. This can be defined as the activities through which the entrepreneur mobilises and assembles resources to exploit an opportunity and materialise it into a structured project. In contrast, culture, as defined by R. Redfield, is "a set of concepts and perceptions agreed upon in society, reflected in art, thought, and aspects of activity, transmitted through inheritance across generations, to give groups distinctive qualities and characteristics." (Al-Khatib, 2006 p. 45)

Whereas the entrepreneurial culture definition could be defined as follows: It is a culture that is characterised by qualities and behaviours that indicate management in initiating and committing to what we want to do or accomplish seriously and strongly to the end. Here, the culture of the project becomes a specific culture because it aims at producing novelty and change and is a culture of creation and construction. The entrepreneurial culture can also be defined as follows: The entrepreneur as a social element represents behaviours as a whole, sometimes individually and socially. These collective symbioses of entrepreneurial behaviours manifest in the culture of entrepreneurship, which is a culture based on (Ali Ahmed Mazkur, 2009):

- Valuing business activities ;
- Valuing individual and collective initiative ;
- Valuing perseverance and determination ;
- Accepting living between security and risk ;
- Tension between stability and change.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of entrepreneurial culture, it is essential to examine the various components that constitute this culture. Primarily,

entrepreneurial culture can be defined as a set of professional values held by the entrepreneur, who is defined as the person who possesses special abilities, including (Khalil, 2022):

a) Need for achievement: providing the best performance and striving to achieve goals, bearing responsibility, working on innovation and continuous development, and differentiation. Consequently, the entrepreneur is always evaluating his performance and achievements in accordance with non-standardised criteria.

b) Self-confidence: the capacity to rely on oneself and one's individual capacities, as well as the ability to think, manage, and make decisions. To solve problems and face future challenges, entrepreneurs must possess a state of self-confidence and confidence in their abilities.

c) Future vision: Looking forward to the future with an optimistic view and the possibility of achieving a distinguished position and increasing profitability levels. Entrepreneurs believe that achieving success and ensuring its continuity is achieved through perseverance, patience, and sacrificing short-term desires to achieve future hopes and goals. Therefore, the guaranteed success of these projects is achieved through diligence, dedication, and giving.

e) Desire for independence: meaning relying on oneself to achieve goals and objectives, and constantly striving to establish independent projects, not characterised by partnerships, especially when they have sufficient financial resources. Entrepreneurs also avoid working for others.

## **2.2. Importance and Components of Entrepreneurial Culture :**

The significance of an entrepreneurial culture can be defined as follows :

« Entrepreneurial culture is the primary catalyst for the formation and sustenance of organisations. It serves as the foundation for the preservation of the group's identity and continuity. It facilitates the discovery of individuals' creative and initiative capabilities, while simultaneously instilling self-confidence. Furthermore, it contributes to the direction of the behaviours of members of society ». (Entrepreneurial Culture, 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Entrepreneurship Foundation,, 1999.)

The components of entrepreneurial culture represent external factors that contribute to the creation of entrepreneurial culture in the individual. With regard to the constituent elements, they are indicators within the individual that provide evidence of the existence of

entrepreneurial culture in him. They can be enumerated as follows (Abdullah Touba and others, 2005) :

- The general environment which is the external factors that influence the development of entrepreneurial culture. Primarily encompasses all factors external to the institution.
- The government which has the pivotal role in the formation of entrepreneurial culture. This encompasses various exemptions and tax reductions offered by governments to entrepreneurs.
- The technology sector which has a significant contributor to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The term "technology" is defined as a set of accumulated knowledge, skills, experiences, tools, and material, organisational, and administrative means used by humans to exploit environmental resources, including resources and energies, to serve them in performing a task or function in their daily lives to satisfy their material and spiritual needs, whether at the individual or societal level.
- Among the factors that influence this phenomenon are those related to social status, such as income, education, and religion.
- The industry environment which influence the operations of an industry.

## ***2.2 Contributions of universities in fostering entrepreneurial culture among students:***

Before elucidating the role of the university in fostering entrepreneurial culture among students, it is necessary to mention new concepts, which are (Salami Mounira, 2008) :

- a) ***Entrepreneurial University***: The teaching of entrepreneurship and academic programs related to it grew in the mid and early 1980s when the number of universities offering entrepreneurship studies increased to more than 250 universities worldwide. This field of study became promising, evolving into a legitimate academic domain due to significant advancements in scientific knowledge. An entrepreneurial university is distinguished by its organizational adaptation to the changing environment, renewing responsibilities and members (students, professors, administrators, and programs). It operates with an entrepreneurial mindset aimed at developing entrepreneurial culture to contribute to economic development through the creation of innovative projects. This is in addition to its teaching function by seeking funding for scientific research and patents. We can enumerate the requirements of the entrepreneurial university (Thabet Abdul Rahman Idris, 2003):

- *Entrepreneurship Education*: It comprises a series of activities aimed at enabling students to comprehend, perceive, and develop their knowledge, skills, and values. This enables them to acquire the skill of problem analysis in a creative manner, identifying, defining, and analyzing problems to find suitable solutions. This type of education requires several conditions, including establishing genuine partnerships between governmental organizations, private organizations, and private sector support entities. These partnerships entail:
- *Entrepreneurship education programs*: What distinguishes entrepreneurship education, as mentioned earlier, is its continuity attribute. Learners acquire preparations and skills throughout their learning journey, contributing to the preparation and development of leadership skills at all educational levels. This starts from the elementary stage to the university, allowing the maturation of knowledge and building on previous experiences, leading to the growth and development of expertise in planning for future projects.
- *Economic Element*: s concerned with the study of economic systems and the functioning of the economy. The objective is to provide participants with an understanding of the economic communities that exist within the environment and the new rules that result from the interactions that occur within these communities. (Al-Zahi, 2013)
- *Entrepreneurial Element*: will provide students with the opportunity to engage with entrepreneurs in their local environment, thereby benefiting from their opinions and advice. It is of paramount importance to engage entrepreneurs with students in their environment, in order to benefit from their opinions and advice.
- *Project Element*: is concerned with the following: It is the fundamental element of any entrepreneurship programme.
- *Entreplexity Element*: This concept refers to the five elements of this model, which must unite and interact in order to remove ambiguity surrounding entrepreneurship practice.
- The activation of seminars and study days is a further element of the model. It is essential to clarify the practical aspects of entrepreneurial education through attendance at seminars, which contribute to the discovery of numerous creative applications. The recognition of prior knowledge facilitates the acquisition of experiential knowledge, thereby encouraging students to innovate and develop a distinctive business concept that can be implemented through the initiation of a project. This process requires the provision of specialised support from colleges and universities offering applied and technical education programmes. (Sanadah, 2021)

The preceding analysis allows us to discern the distinction between the conventional concept of the university and the entrepreneurial university, as illustrated in the following table (Al-Nadawi, 2009):

**Table 1. The difference between the Traditional University and the Entrepreneurial University.**

<b>Traditional University</b>	<b>Entrepreneurial University</b>
Focuses on research and teaching	Focuses on profit and commerce
Managed by the state or a non-profit organization	Owned or operated by a company or commercial entity
Offers education through accredited programs and traditional curricula	Offers education through flexible and updated programs based on market needs
Primary goal is achieving higher education and scientific research	Primary goal is profit-making and financial gains
May be traditional and conservative in educational methods	Innovative and uses modern, flexible teaching methods
Grants academic degrees and educational certificates	May offer accredited or non-accredited programs and professional certificates
Enjoys financial benefits and resources from the government or non-profit institutions	Relies on profit generation and funding through tuition fees, donations, and partnerships with the private sector
Cost of study may be relatively lower	Cost of study may be higher due to commercial nature and additional administrative costs

*Source : (R.Bouhjar, 2019/2020, p. 218)*

### **3. A study of the academic trajectories, entrepreneurial ambitions, and career prospects of entrepreneurship students: A case study at Oran University.**

In order to test our hypothesis, we employed a set of primary tools, including personal interviews, with a sample of 54 students from the University of Oran. The students were in their third year of undergraduate studies, specialising in entrepreneurship. They were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the question axes on a tripartite scale (1, 2, 3). They were also given the option of remaining neutral. The rationale for focusing on this particular sample, rather than students from other disciplines, is the direct relevance of the specialisation programme's content to the research topic. A critical examination of the responses provided by the interviewees. Prior to analysing the responses of the sample

individuals, it was deemed necessary to establish the credibility of the interview segments. Following the questioning of 54 students, the following results were obtained:

**Table 2. Credibility of Interview Questions Using Cronbach's Alpha**

Scale Number of Individuals	Cronbach's Alpha
54	0.712

*Source: Outputs from SPSS Software*

The results of the research can be generalized based on the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.712, which indicates the credibility of the research tool. The interview questions were derived from eight main axes, each comprising a set of phrases through which the alignment of the concept of entrepreneurial university with the University of Oran's offerings to students can be evaluated. This was achieved by applying the theoretical framework to the empirical reality. The following table presents the results of transcribing the responses.

**Table 3. Results of Transcribing Entrepreneurship Students' Responses Regarding the Entrepreneurial University Axis.**

No.	Measurement Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	General Direction
1	The existence of a dedicated steering nucleus at the senior management level.	2.01	0.593	Agreed
2	The availability of modern facilities and equipment infrastructure.	1.05	0.627	Disagreed
3	Encouragement by professors for students to engage in entrepreneurial life.	3.36	0.588	Agreed
4	The university works on providing support from the public and private sectors.	0.19	0.526	Disagreed
5	Providing an image of the environment and economic reality for adaptation to circumstances and exploiting opportunities.	2.89	0.593	Agreed
6	The content of the measures directs students towards entrepreneurial culture and encourages them to take risks.	2.65	0.627	Agreed
7	Organizing seminars and conferences to provide students with scientific knowledge necessary for personal entrepreneurial development.	2.33	0.588	Agreed
8	Training and educating students in technical and managerial skills for managing a small enterprise.	1.33	0.526	Agreed

*Source : Outputs from SPSS Software*

#### 4. Results and Discussion :



The arithmetic mean values in the table above ranged from 2.89 to 0.19. Third-year undergraduate entrepreneurship students expressed their agreement on most of the interview axes, with the exception of axes 2 and 4, where they expressed dissatisfaction regarding the lack of availability of classrooms equipped with internet access and electronic devices supporting their academic achievement in some measures. The average score for this axis was 1.05. Similarly, the arithmetic mean for axis 4 was 0.19 due to the absence of the university's role in initiating collaboration and partnerships with both the private and public sectors to facilitate internships and practical work, and to engage in scientific research to understand how to apply academic aspects of entrepreneurship in the field. This is with the exception of financial support and funding provided by support agencies. For axes 1 and 8, the arithmetic means were 2.01 and 1.33, respectively, indicating that there was a general consensus regarding the existence of a guiding nucleus by senior management, as represented by the Entrepreneurship Center. With regard to the training process and the imparting of technical and managerial skills required to manage their own projects, it was deemed that the Entrepreneurship Center is responsible for this matter. With regard to axes 3, 5, 6, and 7, the arithmetic means for each were 3.36, 2.89, 2.65, and 2.33, respectively. The responses of the students confirmed the efforts made by the professors to raise awareness and instill an entrepreneurial spirit and culture in them. Furthermore, the students expressed gratitude for the provision of information regarding the economic reality, competition, and market conditions in the surrounding environment, which was conveyed through clear explanations and the teaching of effective measures. Furthermore, they highlighted the value of scientific seminars and conferences in providing them with information and statistics about pioneering experiences in the field of entrepreneurship, which they perceived as instrumental in developing an entrepreneurial culture within themselves.

### **5.1 Hypothesis Testing:**

The university's objective is to foster an entrepreneurial culture among students from the outset of their academic careers.

*Ho: The University does not encourages students to establish their own projects by developing an entrepreneurial culture.*

*H1: The University encourages students to establish their own projects by developing an entrepreneurial culture.*

To test this hypothesis, a one-sample t-test was employed. According to the established protocol, the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is rejected if the calculated t-value is less than the tabulated t-value. Conversely, the null hypothesis is accepted if the opposite is true.

**Table 4. Results of One Sample T-Test for the Single Sample.**

Single sample testing							
(Constant) entrepreneurial culture	Valeur du test =o					Intervalle de confiance 95% de la différence	
	T	ddl	Sig. (bilatérale)	Différence moyenne			
					infer	super	
The support of senior management in the university	5,667	50	,000	,32850	,2527	,4625	
The availability of infrastructure at the university	3,245	50	,001	,55863	,1409	,3543	
The role of university professors	5,251	50	,000	,68096	,1273	,5260	
Collaboration between the public and private sectors	3,216	50	,002	,10903	,1098	,3207	
Course content	5,438	50	,000	,17362	,2662	,3476	
Organizing forums on entrepreneurship	3,633	50	,002	,24589	,2896	,4213	
Providing inform about the surrounding environment	7,269	50	,000	,45698	,1398	,3879	
Guiding students and equipping them with the necessary skills to manage their own projects	3,165	50	,002	,23896	,1659	,4089	

*Source : Outputs from SPSS Software*

The statistical results presented in Table 4 indicate that the university's role in encouraging and fostering an entrepreneurial culture among graduating students requires further efforts. The calculated T-values for various axes ranged from 7.269, the highest value, to 3.165, the lowest. The critical T-value\*, which is the value below which the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, was 1.671, which is lower than its calculated counterparts. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis at a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the university is working on encouraging students to establish their own projects by fostering entrepreneurial culture in them.

### **5.2 Results :**

The university's objective is to foster an entrepreneurial culture among its students, with the aim of encouraging them to pursue their own entrepreneurial projects. The findings of the research lead to the following conclusions:

- The establishment of an entrepreneurship centre at the University of Oran, comprising a team of specialised professors, reflects the senior management's intention to foster an entrepreneurial culture among students.
- The introduction of an entrepreneurship specialisation in the Management Sciences department at the undergraduate level also reflects an attempt to develop entrepreneurial culture through the inclusion of measures and their contents.

- Students lack the requisite managerial, technical, and scientific skills to manage their own projects, largely due to the lack of practical education in these areas within the academic curriculum.
- Infrastructure plays an effective role in ensuring that developments in the field of entrepreneurship are kept up to date.
- It is evident that professors play a pivotal role in fostering an entrepreneurial culture by selecting appropriate methods and tools during teaching, thereby equipping students with the requisite skills for entrepreneurial personal development.
- Furthermore, the content of the measures also contributes to the development of entrepreneurial culture among university students.
- A discrepancy exists between the traditional function of the university and the entrepreneurial university's goals. This is because the vision has not been clearly articulated until successful projects materialise in reality.
- It is recommended that an entrepreneurship scale be introduced in all specialties with the aim of developing entrepreneurial culture among graduating students in various fields and domains.

#### **4. Conclusion**

It is evident from the above that the future of entrepreneurship practice in many countries around the world is heading towards education and its activation by governments, universities, research and development centres. This is achieved by giving special importance to the introduction of scientific and academic measures in entrepreneurship, training programmes therein, increasing scientific research in the field, and making it an integral part of the future strategies and policies of societies, regardless of their types.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the educational approach to entrepreneurial behaviour is based on the assumption that entrepreneurship education and the presence of educational and training programmes in universities, institutes, and training centres in any society lead to the development of entrepreneurial orientation among students during the pre-employment stage and while seeking work opportunities. This has the effect of influencing their future aspirations, reinforcing their resolve, and encouraging them to take the initiative in establishing entrepreneurial projects.

The following recommendations are proposed for consideration :

- It is recommended that students be provided with knowledge and applications regarding entrepreneurial competencies and the challenges faced by entrepreneurs when initiating a project.

- It is recommended that students be assisted in the transition from academic life to professional life.
- It is recommended that entrepreneurs be connected with successful institutions in the business field with a view to transferring technologies and problem-solving methods. This is because, according to students' perspectives, financial and material support alone is not sufficient.
- The programme will provide support, guidance, motivation and assistance to students as they develop their enterprise.
- It is recommended that teaching techniques be employed by professors to respond to students' needs for skills and methods to develop their entrepreneurial culture.
- It is recommended that the programme content and measures be modified and updated in order to impart an entrepreneurial culture to students.
- Education at all stages is included in the entrepreneurial culture, as it is considered a fundamental axis in the development of entrepreneurship and the enhancement of its skills and general characteristics.

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