

I'M NOT YOUR STEREOTYPE: GENDERING ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION (EE)

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Questions we care about (objectives)

This study contributes to the body of knowledge of entrepreneurial educators' strategies to work towards gender inclusion in entrepreneurial education (EE). By illustrating how *gender stereotypes* and *gender bias* are constructed and reconstructed in EE. An important insight is taken from the study by (Jones, 2014), this author shows that entrepreneurs are presented in EE as a homogeneous group with similar character traits and an equal 'entrepreneurial mindset' (p. 244). This description portrays a right way to be an entrepreneur which is traditionally been associated with a white western man, masculine behaviour and masculine abilities (Jones, 2014). As a consequence, a paradox in EE appears; training and education reduces the gender gap on the one hand (Cheraghi and Schøtt, 2015), but at the same time it is also the place where the gender gap is maintained because these *gender stereotypes* are intertwined in this training and education (Korhonen, Komulainen and Rätty, 2012). The aim of this paper is to use Social Role Theory in order to better understand the dynamics of gender in EE. This leads to the following research questions: what are the main mechanisms that contribute to gender-inclusive entrepreneurship education (EE) and how are the different mechanisms that contribute to gender inclusive entrepreneurship education (EE) integrated into the current curriculum?

Approach

In-depth interviews with 12 lecturers that teach/coach in the field of EE from across various faculties in a large University for Applied Sciences combined with newsletters created by one of largest EE programs at this institution (267 pages in 2020) is carried out. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to guide the in-depth interviews. Subsequently, discourse analysis gives insight into gendering in EE at the investigated institution.

Results

The main findings suggest that when questioned about the topic all respondents stressed the importance of gender equally, only a few seem to be aware of the need to address the issue in their classroom(s) while none of the programs currently adopt a gender perspective while coaching their potential entrepreneurs or when addressing how the entrepreneurial ecosystem functions.

Implications

These findings and perspectives point to the importance of recognizing that a "one size fits all" approach to curricula may not be appropriate, and that gender-sensitive programming, especially related to dealing with these gender stereotypes and gender bias, are needed. This means that in educational development there are opportunities to create better education and create equal opportunities for male and female students.

Value/originality

Women still form the minority amongst the population of (potential) entrepreneurs and find it more difficult to grow their venture due to a range of (institutional) barriers. This study shows that, thus far, EE insufficiently addresses this topic and points to opportunities for interventions for increasing the gender inclusiveness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, especially for female ones, instilling in them the awareness and knowledge that as a female entrepreneur starting a business isn't without gendered challenges. This research therefore adds to the body of knowledge on the construction and reconstruction of gender stereotypes and gender bias in the field of EE.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial education (EE), Social Role Theory (SRT), incongruity, gender bias and gender stereotypes