

THE PATH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP: SEARCHING AND LEARNING FROM ROLE MODELS

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Questions we care about

In this study, we address the function of role models for entrepreneurship students. By using entrepreneurs as role models, students can get a better and realistic picture of the complexity of the entrepreneurial path. Choosing whom to interview as role model can be diverse, but it can be problematic if, as a result of that choice, the learning effect in the same group of students is different.

Approach

We ask ourselves the question whether female and male students seek out different respondents to the extent, that the lessons learned differ significantly. They were instructed to look for an entrepreneur with a failure story. To answer this question we examine one group with 67 students, 14 of whom are female students and 53 are male students; we collected sex as a binary variable and leave the discussion about gender diversity out of this paper.

Results

In this paper, we identify with empirical evidence the differences in the way that male and female students approach an assignment in EE. With that information, we reflect the implications for their learning processes and learning experiences when the whole group receives the same assignment but different role models are found.

Implications

Our findings show differences between male and female students in four key aspects: the choice of interviewing a female or a male entrepreneur, the sector in which the company operates, the size of the company, and the decision of the entrepreneur to continue after problems. The group of students chose in most cases a male entrepreneur: male and females students chose overwhelmingly for a male entrepreneur. Another finding is that male students found entrepreneurs with bigger companies. Furthermore, and very important in relation to the research of failure and recovery, the decision to continue with the company after serious setbacks is also different: male students learn from different stories: those who stopped, continued or re started; while female students get the picture to start a whole new company after a failure event.

Value

More attention is needed in EE to provide equal possibilities for all students. The question for further exploration is whether female students are getting less out of the assignment because of their choice of an entrepreneur, and whether female students are being trained to follow male images of entrepreneurship. This may be caused by the fact that entrepreneurship education is primarily masculine in nature and inspires female students less.

Keywords: role models, entrepreneurship education, inspiring cases, sex differences