

The implementation of creative specialties within the context of the model for entrepreneurial competencies

Tiiu Männiste¹, Andres Rõigas^a, Lii Araste^a, Marju Mäger^a

^a *Viljandi Culture Academy, University of Tartu*

Summary

Introduction

The discourse of entrepreneurial studies has reached the field of education and the obvious necessity of its implementation has also been proven by various strategies and studies. From the perspective of teaching creative specialties, it is of increasing importance for the economy across the world. It was in 2015 when the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy began to apply obligatory entrepreneurial studies across all programs in the Estonian educational system. The experience of several years provides sufficient ground for analysis to learn to what extent the entrepreneurial competencies have merged with the courses for creative specializations. The article examines, based on qualitative content analysis, the learning outcomes relating to entrepreneurial competence and study formats that develop creative entrepreneurship in the applied higher education study programs of the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy across the applied higher education curricula from the academic years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. As a result of the analysis it was found that the curricula focused primarily on cultural competency due to the specific features of the school. The economy related knowledge directly connected to entrepreneurship is, as a series of outcomes, mostly established in entrepreneurial courses and in interdisciplinary projects that show features of an educational environment supporting entrepreneurial culture. Despite the fact that the ties between the outcomes of the creative courses and the courses developing entrepreneurship at the Academy are weak, and the culture supporting entrepreneurship has not yet been formed into an integrated whole embracing all aspects, it is possible to find competencies characteristic to entrepreneurship among the outcomes of the specialty modules of the curricula.

¹ University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy, Posti 1, 71004 Viljandi, Estonia; tiiu.manniste@ut.ee

Theoretical background

The introduction of total entrepreneurial studies at the Culture Academy is a challenge to administration, lecturers and researchers alike because of the lack of previous experience across creative specialties in the Estonian educational system. The research was further complicated by the multitude of assessment methods and frameworks for entrepreneurial competencies, and the influencing factors related to entrepreneurial studies, such as distinctive differences of creative fields and academic environment (Abreu & Grinevich, 2014), and the specifics of classical entrepreneurship and creative industries.

The studies so far have mostly focused on acquiring entrepreneurial competencies from the student's perspective (e.g. Smith & Morse, 2005). Significantly less research has been devoted to integrating entrepreneurial studies across each curriculum as a whole. Bacigalupo et al. (2016) have developed an EntreComp framework, the main aim of which is to create a unified comparative framework for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial studies that would be utilised across the European Union. Although the research is primarily based on describing the main characteristics of the competencies, it is still targeted at those carrying out the learning process, i.e. lecturers, for both designing the entrepreneurial studies and for tying it to a variety of specialties. The approach of the Viljandi Culture Academy is based on action-based, or entrepreneurship-practice-oriented entrepreneurial studies where competencies have been assessed according to both qualitative and quantitative methods (Lackéus, 2013a, 2013b). The aim of the given studies is to find out how the action-based entrepreneurial studies may develop entrepreneurial competencies, combining both emotional experience and the outcome of entrepreneurial studies (Lackéus, 2013b). That is why the authors have used, in the context of their research, the model of entrepreneurial competencies by Lackéus (2013a) as the basis, and the development of complete entrepreneurial competencies for creative specialties have been analysed according to that model.

Methodology

The study attempted to find out how the entrepreneurial studies have been put into general practice, i.e. how much the entrepreneurial competencies have become integrated into the curricula of the creative specialties, how the entrepreneurial studies have become linked within and across the specialties and what attitudes have developed towards total entrepreneurial studies. Empirical data was gathered in two stages. In the first stage, the objectives and learning outcomes of seven curricula for applied higher education studies for

the academic years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 were analysed with the method of qualitative content analysis, in search of an answer to the question which entrepreneurial competencies are reflected in the curricula of creative specialties for applied higher education studies. Encoding the data was carried out on the basis of the Lackéus (2013a) model for entrepreneurial competencies. The codes were categorised and results generalised on in the process of the analysis.

The second stage of the research involved a web-based questionnaire of open-ended questions carried out among program managers of different specialties at the Culture Academy. It was hoped that the questionnaire would enable identification of entrepreneurial competencies that were being developed in various study modules, courses and learning formats as well as the successes and failures of implementing entrepreneurial studies and the overall disposition of respondents and their attitude towards their entrepreneurial studies. The questions were based on the results obtained during stage one and on the theoretical framework; a separate section focused on the introduction of entrepreneurial studies in order to provide the research topic with some context. Eight out of nine program managers at the Culture Academy completed the questionnaire and qualitative content analysis was applied as the method for analysing the data.

Results and discussion

The answers to the first research question (How are entrepreneurial competencies integrated in the curricula of the creative specialties?) were obtained through the Lackéus model of competencies and by questioning the program managers. One of the most important results was that learning environment of creative specialties already has, by nature, competencies and learning formats characteristic to entrepreneurship, in addition, they have earlier been integrated in the learning outcomes of the specialty modules independent of the obligatory courses of the entrepreneurship studies. The Viljandi Culture Academy, as a specific and multidisciplinary learning environment of creative specialties expects, innately, entrepreneurial competencies (interpretation of ideas and plans, presentation skills and production) and creativity-driven active attitudes. The results of the questionnaire reflect the problems of, and obstacles to, administering entrepreneurial studies. Concerning the practical aspect of the studies, the program managers referred to the enterprising culture of the school, especially in relation to school-wide events and projects.

As a theoretical basis, the authors have proceeded from the concept of the spread of innovation. Therefore, the introduction of entrepreneurial studies

across creative specialties was analysed as innovation (Tidd et al., 2011). The responses to the second and third questions (What are the attitudes of the workers of creative specialties to implementing entrepreneurial studies? What are the major problems and development needs upon implementing entrepreneurial studies across creative specialties?) revealed that upon introducing entrepreneurial studies, the natural reluctance to it by creative specialties was not taken into account, neither the specifics of the spread of innovation. Introducing total entrepreneurial studies resembles general culture of changes that requires complex and well-planned activities (the School of Translational Health Science ..., 2013), such as strategic communication, clear and transparent roles and professional help, including all the people involved. Upon developing the system of entrepreneurial studies in the context of innovation and inclusion, it is important to create a unified background for those carrying out the entrepreneurial studies, and for the lecturers of different courses regarding the knowledge and skills, and most importantly concerning attitudes. In addition, the program manager also needs professional support while implementing the total entrepreneurial studies.

Further considerations

Based on the results of the present study, it is possible to focus on two directions while carrying out further research on the entrepreneurial competencies of creative industries. Describing the outcomes of the entrepreneurial studies, it is possible to view the graduates of the Culture Academy work as entrepreneurs and assess the success of the entrepreneurial studies this way. Another aspect concerns paying attention to measuring the competencies of the students, and their changes over the course of their studies. Although the competencies of students have been analysed in different studies more than those of the lecturers, this topic deserves to be discussed primarily in the context of creative industries.

Keywords: entrepreneurial studies, entrepreneurial competencies, creative specialties