

# Entrepreneurship Education: A Selective Examination of the Literature

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## Abstract

We build two different frameworks of analysis in order to examine recent literature on entrepreneurial education at two levels: (i) theoretical contributions, and (ii) emerging challenges and solutions in the entrepreneurial classroom. These simple frameworks are used to classify and analyze articles published on the subjects of entrepreneurship education, encompassing methodologies, theories, contents, frameworks and evaluation of programs/subjects, selected from a wide range of journals in the fields of Management and Education over the period 2000–2011.



# 1

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## Introduction

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Entrepreneurship education has progressed in great strides and has spread widely around the world in recent decades. This proliferation has been supplemented by increasing diversity in pedagogic approaches and an increasing number of courses addressing special subjects within the entrepreneurial process [Vesper and Gartner, 1997, Katz, 2003]. Entrepreneurship is now a well-established academic discipline [Gartner and Vesper, 1994, Fiet, 2000b] and a legitimate course of study [Vesper and Gartner, 1997, Katz, 2003].

The booming pursuit of entrepreneurship education over the last few decades has drawn a growing interest in entrepreneurship education research, leading to the establishment of an increasingly rich field of study. Yet, there seems to be a gap in the literature on entrepreneurship education that prevents it from making stronger contributions toward practice. Articles centered on the development of methods, programs, and frameworks often reflect experiences that are context-specific. Empirical validation is usually limited to those specific contexts. Entrepreneurship education research seems to be more focused on what works in the classroom than on developing cutting edge theoretical contributions.

Entrepreneurship education is a complex process. Gartner and Vesper [1994] examine the successes and failures of entrepreneurship education experimentation in different countries and reveal a considerable diversity of programs offered, a feature also noticed by Gorman et al. [1997]. Widespread methods used in entrepreneurship courses or programs include: case studies; readings [Gartner and Vesper, 1994]; business plans [Hills, 1988, Vesper and McMullan, 1988, Gartner and Vesper, 1994]; interviews with entrepreneurs [Solomon et al., 1994]; class discussion [Solomon, 2007]; guest speakers [Solomon, 2007, Gartner and Vesper, 1994]; business visits and field trips [Gartner and Vesper, 1994]; internships and working with entrepreneurs [Hills, 1988, Johannisson, 1991]; and development of business start-ups [Hills, 1988]. The use of technology has been increasing [Solomon, 2007] and computer-based simulations are gaining acceptance [Shepherd, 2004, Haase and Lautenschlager, 2011].

Despite these developments, there are issues that remain overlooked, such as entrepreneurship educators' need for unified contents and teaching methods [Gorman et al., 1997]. Pedagogical competences and methodologies still need to be developed [Kuratko, 2005], and questions related with best practices to adopt in the entrepreneurial classroom are emerging, as predicted by Katz [2003].

The absence of a unified, accepted theory or definition of entrepreneurship education is an issue that remains unresolved [Sexton and Bowman, 1984, Hills, 1988, Fiet, 2000a]. Fayolle and Gailly [2008] argue that there is a lack of a precise definition of entrepreneurship as a teaching field where philosophical conceptions about teaching, the role of the teacher and the role of the students, should be clarified in each course.

Literature reviews are important to analyze recent research, to reflect about the course of future developments, such as Dainow [1986] and Gorman et al. [1997] emphasize and, to provide practical guidelines for educators. The objective of this monograph is to provide a selective analysis of the progress made in the field by looking in particular at the contributions made to theory and at the challenges that keep emerging in practice.

We build two different frameworks of analysis in order to examine recent literature at two levels: (i) theoretical contributions, and (ii) emerging challenges and solutions in the entrepreneurial classroom. These simple frameworks are used to classify and analyze articles published on the subjects of entrepreneurship education, encompassing methodologies, theories, contents, frameworks and evaluation of programs/subjects, selected from a wide range of journals in the fields of Management and Education over the period 2000–2011.

The study is organized as follows. After this introduction, Section 2 looks at the roots and emergence of entrepreneurship education, and its progress toward the end of the 20th Century. Section 3 presents and discusses the methodology used to select the papers examined for the purpose of applying our frameworks. Section 4 presents a simple framework of analysis to classify and assess theoretical contributions, and applies it systematically to the papers selected in Section 3. Section 5 presents our second framework of analysis, targeted at problems and solutions emerging from practice in the entrepreneurial classroom, and applies it to our selection of papers. Section 6 concludes, reflecting on the value and limitations of the analysis while providing suggestions for future research.

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