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Entrepreneurship is very important for the economy of a country and it is seen as a key force for economic development. In less developed countries where poverty and mass unemployment are the dominant facts of economic life, entrepreneurship is considered as a solution to face unemployment. Entrepreneurs are the engines of the economy, who use their knowledge and inspiration accompanied with a great risk to provide new, challenging products and services. The aim of this study is to understand the graduates' attempts towards entrepreneurial activities, some of the factors that motivated them to become entrepreneurs and barriers that they faced. The quantitative data is used to present the findings of an exploratory research which was applied on alumni of Epoka University via a structured questionnaire. A sample of 115 graduates is collected from their answers. Through descriptive analysis is determined the impact of knowledge, skills, work experience, and inspirational model on the entrepreneurial intent of Epoka University graduates, to promote entrepreneurship, reduce unemployment, develop innovation and strengthen the economy. Besides entrepreneurs, this study investigates the entrepreneurial intent of employed and unemployed alumni and concluded they had a positive attitude towards it. This study tends to contribute to the university as well as the Government in increasing efforts to encourage more students to entrepreneurship activities as their career path upon graduation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Graduates, Opportunities, Competences, Epoka University, Albania

Introduction

Entrepreneurship, as an economic and social phenomenon, is being studied by many researchers. In various researches the focus is to the question of why some graduates decide to be undertake the entrepreneurial career while others are disposed to seek work in other companies. Different factors like family environment, self-concept, motivation and risk-taking propensity have significant and positive effect on university students' willingness on entrepreneurship (Herdjiono, et al., 2017). In economic terms, entrepreneurial activities are important to ensure economic development. In literature is strong evidence that entrepreneurship is not only important for the economy, but also critical for the development of individuals in today's society (Kruja, 2013). Taking into consideration the importance of entrepreneurship in the economy, today is becoming more and more essential development of individuals with entrepreneurial skills who can

support the increasing demand of society in the context of economic development (Shaqiri, 2015).

Another important part is the promotion of entrepreneurial intention and attitudes in education. Rudhumbu, et al. (2016) highlight the aspects of entrepreneurship education that focus on values, beliefs and attitudes as these play an important role in forming student's attitude towards entrepreneurship. In empirical studies over the years, many attempts have been distinguished by researchers to measure entrepreneurial willingness and to find its determining factors. A career that is determined by entrepreneurship offers the individuals a lot of opportunities to enjoy independence, gather greater financial payback and gain towards overall economy through a contribution to innovation, job enhancement, and economic development (Ahmed, et al., 2010).

Education is very important, and it affects the entrepreneurial intent of students. Stimulating entrepreneurship through education and training has received a lot of attention from various researchers (Kruja, 2019; Zenelaj & Kruja, 2017; Kruja & Kadiasi, 2020). The focus of different studies is to determine effects of universities' efforts on entrepreneurial career choices and achievements of students. The study undertaken by Kume et al. (2013) shows that among other factors, entrepreneurial education has a positive impact on the entrepreneurial willingness of students. Karabulut (2014) emphasize that mostly entrepreneur alumni agree or strongly agree that support of their instructors leaded them to entrepreneurship. Meanwhile Shaqiri (2015) emerged the fact that students who are exposed to the entrepreneurial education have a higher entrepreneurial perception than students who did not have such an experience. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of education as a factor that influence the individual and shape his will to choose self-employment as a career. Depending on previous experiences and attitude of students, education can create new perspectives; provide courage and knowledge that will encourage entrepreneurial skills (Garo, 2015). More and more researchers in this field seem convinced that entrepreneurs are not born, and entrepreneurship can be learned, and skills can be absorbed during entrepreneurial education (Shaqiri, 2015). Education programs can learn and encourage entrepreneurial behaviour. Liñán (2004) concluded in his study that education for entrepreneurial dynamism is considered very important because it tries to promote the intention of being an entrepreneur and to develop dynamic entrepreneurial behaviours. Garo (2015) supports the idea that universities should foster innovation and experience, expose students to inspirational models, and build a bridge with successful businesses. Entrepreneurial willingness of Albanian students can be developed through entrepreneurial education, highlighting the know-how component of education as a determining factor in improving their attitudes (Shaqiri, 2015). Universities should be focused to provide training programmes in the field of entrepreneurship to generate ideas and experience; thus, encourage students to become entrepreneurs (Garo, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

Entrepreneurial education is a new discipline in Albania, and it is still not integrated into specific courses or on specific branches. Experiences in developed countries in this field suggest the importance of entrepreneurship integration in universities not only in business administration profiles but also in other programs. Even

though students through different sources can obtain information about entrepreneurship and its importance, entrepreneurial education help them more in this career path. In Albania, the labor market for young people is characterized by a high level of unemployment. Consequently, the need for promoting entrepreneurial education in universities is a must for encouraging creativity, innovation and self-employment. Universities should be focused more on entrepreneurial activities, where students would gain confidence to face market challenges. In this way, they will undertake initiatives to start up innovative businesses and gradually change the culture and the situation in the country. Despite the university's support, also government place an important role. In Albania there are lack of opportunities for encouraging youth toward entrepreneurship. In order to make more efforts to motivate students toward entrepreneurial activities, this research provides an understanding of the factors that motivate students on choosing the entrepreneurial career and the barriers that they face in Albania.

Research Design and Findings

The purpose of this study is to present the findings of an exploratory research which was applied on graduates of Epoka University. This study employed a descriptive research design that used a structured survey strategy for primary data collection. The university was founded in 2009 and had 1073 alumni of all faculties. It was not possible to reach all alumni by e-mails. Thus, the questionnaire was sent to all alumni students via university e-mail and LinkedIn, but 115 usable questionnaires were collected back. For data analysis, the survey was divided into three sections except the general information: self-employed, employed and unemployed.

33 of the respondents (28.7%) were entrepreneurs and 51.30% were employed. Graduates were asked about the reasons or factors that influenced their decision to become entrepreneurs and they had the possibility to choose more than one answer. 25 out of 33 respondents (75.75%) have their own business because they wanted to be leaders. 66.66% have become entrepreneurs because they wanted autonomy and greater control of workspace, whereas 63.63% have established own business because of earnings. From all entrepreneurs 10 of them choose lack of employment opportunities as a reason to open own business. This question is used to understand the motivating factors that have influenced alumni students to choose entrepreneurship as a career opportunity.

42 (71.19%) out of 59 employed graduates are planning to become entrepreneurs for different reasons. 28 respondents out of 42 (66.66%) consider opening their own business as a realization of their ideas, vision and dreams. 47.62% of employed graduates want to open a business to become reach and earn more money, 52.38% want to become their own boss, 45.24% sees being an entrepreneur as an opportunity for career advancement, 38.1% want to open a business to connect it with passion, 35.71% to seek challenge through self-employment and 4.76% want to open their own business to be respected. Those who answered no were further asked to define some important demotivators for them to start a business. 9 of 17 respondents (52.94%) choose unsupportive business environment, 47.05% found financial risk and government regulations as barriers to become entrepreneurs. Another factor considered important from them was lack of funding to start a business and about 41.17% choose it.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Studies made in Albania state that there is a need for new knowledge in the field of management and entrepreneurship. Different researchers raise the problem of an education that responds to market needs, where theory and practice can merge, and talents are supported and inspired to create new ventures in the future. Providing entrepreneurial training and education in university is a solution to improve the economic situation in a country like Albania, since education exposes students toward entrepreneurial activities, teaches them knowledge and skills to become entrepreneurs, and provides all the opportunities to start a new venture. The aim of this study was to give a clear view regarding entrepreneurship among graduates of Epoka University, in order to understand factors motivating them and barriers they face. The results of this study provide insights to university and government to realize some of the difficulties that new entrepreneurs face. Entrepreneurship is known for its importance in economic growth of a country, that's why universities and governments should make more efforts to create different facilities that encourage youth toward entrepreneurship career.

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