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Impact of Entrepreneurship Education in Saudi Arabia Universities on Achieving Strategic Goal of Saudi Vision 2030

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Abstract

One of the strategic goals of Saudi Vision 2030 is nurturing and supporting innovation, as well as educational entrepreneurship. The reasoning behind such decision lays in the diversification of the economic sectors and potential generation of job opportunities. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact of entrepreneurship education on the implementation of strategic goals of Saudi Vision 2030. To investigate the effect of entrepreneurial education, the study considers economic, social, and environmental dimensions of newly promoted educational curriculum. The methodology of the research includes phenomenology and statistical analysis, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Potential limitations of the thesis include confirmation bias of the convenience sample and failure to consider generation gap variables. Findings of the study provide an in-depth explanation of the Saudi Vision 2030, initiating the discussion between lawmakers and educators.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, education, Vision 2030, Saudi vision, innovation, entrepreneurship curriculum

Introduction

Aiming at rapid national economic growth, Saudi Arabia implements 96 objectives of diversifying the country's economic sectors, known as Saudi Vision 2030. One of the primary goals of the campaign is to generate more job opportunities and encourage self-employment among young graduates. With this intent in mind, this thesis assesses the impact of entrepreneurship education in Saudi Arabia universities on nurturing and supporting innovation in the upcoming decade.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, Saudi Arabia is working toward reducing the nation's dependence on oil by diversifying the country's economic sectors and developing education, health, infrastructure, and tourism spheres. As a part of the Saudi Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia government promotes entrepreneurship education as one of the ways to enhance national economic growth through generation of jobs ("KSA vision 2030: Strategic objectives and vision realization programs," 2020). Innovation facilitated within the novel curriculum promotes a balanced and investment-based model of the Saudi economy, equipping students with necessary skills to meet the demand of the labor market.

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the influence of entrepreneurship education on accomplishing the strategic goal of nurturing and supporting innovation within the context frames of Saudi Vision 2030. Mixed quantitative-qualitative approach will be applied to investigate environmental, economic, and social challenges associated with the promotion of education in Saudi Arabia. Obtained from online surveys and focus groups discussion, the information will be analyzed in accordance to the current scholarly sources.

Importance of Topic to Body of Knowledge

Analyzing the significance of innovation and entrepreneurship education is central to the understanding of Saudi Vision 2030. Little empirical research investigating the influence of newly created educational curriculum for Saudi schools and universities exists. With the quantitative evidence and qualitative support on the subject matter, the study will contribute to the further research by providing basis for the work of public authorities, advocates, and educators. Themes developed as a result of the theoretical discussions can be utilized to facilitate research, technological advancement, and innovation among young Saudi students.

Objectives of the Thesis

This thesis aims to meet the following objectives;

1. To analyze the connection between innovation, entrepreneurship education, and Saudi Vision 2030.
2. To investigate the economic, social, and environmental challenges associated with the strategic goal of nurturing innovation and education entrepreneurship.
3. To examine the effect of entrepreneurship education on diversification of the economic sectors, as outlined in Vision 2030.

Research Plan

The research utilizes a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach, obtaining the information for further analysis from online surveys and focus groups. Convenience sample with the following inclusion criteria will be used to facilitate discussions within the focus groups: 1) university student or educator in Saudi Arabia; 2) speaks English or Arab language. For the online surveys, randomly stratified sample will be chosen. Phenomenology will constitute a central methodology for the study with elements of statistical analysis. The derived themes, supported by statistical findings, will be used to establish the correlation between entrepreneurship education and Vision 2030.

Limitations

The study has potential limitations in regard to the chosen types of population samples. In particular, the threat of confirmation bias of the researcher is introduced with the usage of convenience sample. The thesis also fails to address concomitant variables contributing to the formation of innovative environment as a part of Vision 2030. Little emphasis is put on the restrictions associated with the generation gap of youth undergoing the newly introduced entrepreneurship training.

Literature Review

The Saudi Vision 2030

The Saudi Vision 2030 incorporates a number of strategic goals, one of which is nurturing and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship education. With the aim of diversifying its economic sectors, Saudi Arabia seeks to establish novel entrepreneurship education curriculums as a source of new job opportunities in the market (Yusuf & Albanawi, 2016a). As mentioned by Almahdi (2019), entrepreneurship is a discipline that can be taught to secondary school and university students, shaping their attitudes toward self-employment. With self-employment at the potential rise in the country, the government hopes to expand the production activities and widen the array of industries fueled by technological progress and innovation (Almahdi, 2014). The need for entrepreneurship education becomes evident as researchers compare the attitudes of students who were exposed to novel training and those in the controlled group, reporting on entrepreneurship.

The Saudi Vision 2030 tries to consider the relationship between educational and business sectors when making an informed decision of utilizing human capital. As written by Yusuf and Albanawi (2016b), graduates are more likely to engage in self-employment if their home educational institution provided substantial support and training along with the novel curriculum. Almahdi (2014) also emphasizes that the question of Saudi's strategic goal also lies at the core of inclusive participation of the government, universities, and business industries. Though the reasoning behind nurturing innovation in Saudi Arabia appears clear, little evidence is given in support of the students' long-term commitment to novel spheres of production

Entrepreneurship

One of the acknowledged key variables to enable youths to comprehend and cultivate entrepreneurial interest and attitude has been the importance of entrepreneurship education and the university environment (Jabeen, Faisal & Katsioloudes, 2017). University-level entrepreneurship offers students the opportunity to be more knowledgeable of the latest developments, which provides a better understanding of how such developments can be applied into prospective businesses. The main aspect is to use high-level skills to initiate new business and develop such skills to extend the business (Minniti and Lévesque, 2008). Consequently, a substantial number of people with academic education may pursue an entrepreneurial career. There are few research studies, nevertheless, centered on the university level in the field of entrepreneurship education (Raposo et al., 2008; Sánchez, 2009).

Sine and Lee (2009) acknowledged the supportive role of the social and economic development of entrepreneurs. The number of Entrepreneurship Education Programs (EEPs), in most developed countries, has grown very dramatically over the past three decades (Barak, 2012; Varblane and Mets, 2010; Spiteri and Maringe, 2014). Such programs are planned to orient students in the direction of becoming self-employed and teach students how to create and run their own business venture. As the number of EEPs is rising, earlier research has generated diverse findings regarding the impact of EEPs on entrepreneurial intention. Some studies showed that EEPs have a favorable effect on entrepreneurial intention (Guerrero, Rialp & Urbano, 2008; Krueger, 2009; Liñán and Chen, 2009; Müller, 2011; Iakovleva, Kolvereid & Stephan, 2011). Many studies, for instance, showed that EEPs have a favorable effect on the perceived attractiveness and feasibility of a new business (Müller, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014) and on personal self-efficacy, pro-activeness and the ability to take the risk (Sánchez, 2013). Many other researchers discovered that the relation between the EEP and the student's intention to start up a new business after their graduation from the program is favorable and direct (Dickson, Solomon & Weaver, 2008; Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Souitaris, Zerbinati & Al-Laham, 2007). Other researchers noticed, on the other

hand, that there is a detrimental relationship between attending an EEP and entrepreneurial intention (Martin, MacNally & Kay 2012; Mentoor & Friedrich, 2007; Oosterbeek, Praag & Ijsselstein, 2010), although few other studies showed that there is no relation between attending an EEP and entrepreneurial intention (do Paço et al., 2015).

In the context of the transformation of knowledge and skills in traditional education, entrepreneurial education is perceived as a model of paradigm shift of motive and attitude (Zamberi, 2013; Fayolle and Gailly, 2015). Entrepreneurship and education of entrepreneurs have a higher market chance (Béchard and Gregory, 2005; Holmgren et al., 2004). The desire and the capacity to initiate a new business are two essential elements for success; entrepreneurial attitude is strongly necessary for both entrepreneurial career and independent employment affairs (Korunka et al., 2010). Education of entrepreneurs is not only about teaching students how to operate a venture (Cathy, 2005) but about the learning to create and sustain a business (Dahleez, 2009). The core elements of entrepreneurship education allow individuals to recognize possibilities in their lives, the ability to start and handle new ventures, and the individual's ability to think more creatively and objectively (Burleson, 2005). Moreover, entrepreneurial education not only tends to focus on business knowledge and skills, but mainly on establishing beliefs, values, and attitudes, in order to make entrepreneurship more appealing than usual paid job or unemployment to students (Sánchez, 2011).

It is important for a system of entrepreneurship education at the university level to be developed, bearing in mind that not every person studying or receiving entrepreneurship education will be willing to become an entrepreneur, to promote entrepreneurship training and to understand the role of such education, as well as what students expect from such programs can be supportive of the concept that entrepreneurs are on numerous occasions made not born, owing to the spread of entrepreneurship education, (Van der Sijde et al., 2008). It is stated by Keat and Ahmad (2012) that, to make it likely to transform the traditional teaching approach and transfer knowledge to students into motivating them to not be the mere act of receiving knowledge in a passive manner, but more active, an excellent

entrepreneurship educator and an educational institution are supposed to be established.

The teaching approach, in entrepreneurship education, should be oriented in the direction of entrepreneurship, taking into account the social interaction, activation of a student, and the orientation of the student (Ollila and Williams-Middleton, 2011) The role of entrepreneurial education in entrepreneurial intention research was measured on the basis of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Schlaegel and Koenig, 2014), which has a steady theoretic base. TPB notes that the behavior of a person is dependent on the person's intention, the greater the person's intention to commit a certain behavior the more probable it is to occur. Furthermore, the intention of the person to commit a certain behavior is focused on three factors, behavioral attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral control. Entrepreneurship education is deemed a decent indicator of entrepreneurship. Business education and entrepreneurship have two varying definitions; entrepreneurship is generally assumed to increase entrepreneurship's awareness as an alternative career path to employment (Slavtchev, Laspita and Patzelt 2012) while business education is centered on educating students to work at established businesses (Grey 2002).

It is fair to assume that education of entrepreneurship is more connected to entrepreneurial intentions than education since the education of entrepreneurship focuses on developing and growing the skills and knowledge necessary for entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship education provides courses in new business planning, for instance, which adds to the student's boosted appetite for risk-taking. In comparison, business education is focused mostly on the attitudes, intentions, and the process of firm creation (Liñán, 2008) as compared to entrepreneurship education that provides business management knowledge and does not rely on creating one. That implies that entrepreneurship graduates are three times more likely than non-entrepreneurs to start up a business (Charney & Libecap, 2000). Although business education has to do with perceived knowledge, it does not impact business intentions; it seeks to educate students with skills and knowledge as to how to be recruited by firms (Davidsson, 1995). Packham et al. (2010) show that entrepreneurial education has a favorable effect on the entrepreneurial attitude of

French and Polish students in their studies carried out at European higher education institutions (HEIs), where on the other hand has an unfavorable effect on German male students. The study also demonstrated that although female students are expected to benefit from the learning experience, the effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial attitude is in reality more substantial for male students. Siyanbola et al. (2012) also showed that education of parents, entrepreneurship education, and family business history have an impact, among others, on the entrepreneurial interest of students in Nigeria.

Previous studies

Current theoretical paradigm lacks empirical research investigating the influence of entrepreneurship education on the implementation of the strategic goals of Saudi Vision 2030, focusing primarily on the aftermath of the innovative curriculums. While the study conducted by Yusuf and Albanawi (2016b) provides an exclusive explanation of entrepreneurship as a generator of job opportunities in Saudi Arabia, it fails to provide evidence for the existing correlation between innovation and diversification of the market. Almahdi (2019) outlined the foundations for entrepreneurial leadership with practical recommendations for educational adoption techniques to harness the global talent. Though the research effectively explains the principles essential to the understanding of innovation as Saudi strategic goal, the study does not fully address the necessity of incorporating entrepreneurship education in the institutions of all levels.

This thesis is most closely supported by the research of Yusuf and Albanawi (2016a) who analyze the graduates' decision-making process in perspective of the Saudi Vision 2030. The authors focus on entrepreneurship education of youth as a determinant of self-employment in the future, taking into consideration the strategic cooperation between business and universities. Using statistical approach in their study, Yusuf and Albanawi (2016a) do not fully capture all the themes associated with the subject matter, relying on quantitative rather than qualitative measures. The combination of the quantitative and qualitative methods is required for further educational research.

Summary

Saudi Arabia adopts 96 objectives of diversifying the country's economic sectors, known as Saudi Vision 2030, to achieve fast economic growth, which primarily focuses on generating more job opportunities and encourage self-employment among young graduates. The Saudi Vision 2030 incorporates a number of strategic goals, one of which is nurturing and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship education. With the aim of diversifying its economic sectors, Saudi Arabia seeks to establish novel entrepreneurship education curriculums as a source of new job opportunities in the market. Entrepreneurship education is a key element that makes it possible for students to cultivate entrepreneurial interest, be up to speed with regard to the latest developments, and how they could be introduced in new businesses, acts as a job generator, and help students recognize possibilities in their lives, the ability to start and handle new ventures, and the ability to think more creatively and objectively. Over the years more students have been pursuing an entrepreneurial career, in which students are taught as to how run and sustain their business ventures, thus, leading to studies looking at the impact of these programs (EEPs) on that entrepreneurial intention, which later showed positive effect, direct effect, unfavorable effect, and no relation regarding that entrepreneurial intention. Current theoretical paradigm lacks empirical research that look at the impact of entrepreneurship education on the implementation of the strategic goals of Saudi Vision 2030. Although some studies have been conducted on such matter, yet neither did they fully neither neither address the matter nor provided an evidence of the existing correlation.

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