

# Freedom, Individuality and Women`s Entrepreneurship Education

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## Abstract

Our research investigates two main questions as follows: (i) How can we encourage the entrepreneurial abilities of students through education with focus on women?, and (ii) In what direction the educational strategies should be developed? The research methodology involves carrying out in-depth interviews with respondents from Serbia, Iran, India and United States. The authors concluded that the modern business environment should be accompanied by the change in educational environment. Furthermore, the new entrepreneurship education strategy should provide a more women centred approach. It is also impossible to achieve all new education advantages without close relationships between governments, schools and women`s organizations.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Individuality, Freedom, Women, Contemporary Technologies

## 1 Introduction

The new Age requests for a new education strategy. The new education strategy should be focused on active mode of learning and individual`s growth. It means an interactive style and education based on individual needs and abilities that should provide a completely new dimension of gaining knowledge and make learning a more convenient process. In addition, new technologies allow for exploration of new areas of learning and thinking. These could support creative learning and innovative teaching and foster individual potential. The new education strategy also needs freedom in learning and teaching and an active mode of learning influences innovative personality development which creates something unique and turns it into entrepreneurial activity. It is also impossible to achieve all new education advantages without close relationships between governments, schools and women`s organizations. In other words, only their synergies allows the education system to be efficient and can bring prosperity for women.

To many scholars, although women are improving their status in the educational systems, yet there are some nuances in their approach. In this study, the authors will try to investigate the women`s entrepreneurship education, concentrating on the gender differences between the respondents. Therefore, first we will discuss the education strategies appropriate to increase in learning the entrepreneurial abilities of students through education with focus on women. Afterwards, we will discuss in what direction the educational strategies should be developed in the future.

## 2 Theoretical Background

A good education system gives students the freedom to recognize their capabilities and individual potentials. In this way, as Forte [1] elaborates, in order to let students the freedom to learn, creating a new classroom atmosphere where thinking, questioning and imagining is encouraged, and is not hampered, is critical. In this context, education should foster students to work collaboratively; ask questions and creatively about ideas and issues across a range of disciplines. As creative thinkers, they try to imagine and explore alternatives, and to think in a different manner. Such an approach is required for a solid academic foundation and in order to enhance their intelligence, including "soft skills" such as understanding, empathy and communication skills [2]. The use of different learning materials and various resources allows students with various principal learning styles to understand information in the most effective way. The learning is fostered by multidimensional interactions

between students and teachers. To learn on their own, youth need unlimited time to play, explore, become bored, overcome boredom, discover their own interests, and pursue those interests [3]. It helps students develop their analytical and critical reasoning skills with particular emphasis on exploring and evaluating competing claims and different perspectives. Indeed, education leads to greater personal freedom through greater competence, if it becomes organized to consider diverse perspectives [4]. However, as Forte [1] argues, a student's freedom to learn requires the teacher's freedom to teach and these are in a close relationship with each other. In this context, current educational systems need to adopt new methods and strategies that are able to support made educational goals and ensure the freedom of learning and teaching. To many scholars, educational strategies should provide the learners with a fertile ground to flourish their potentials. In this way, the learner will not be hampered by disturbing and discriminating elements. As Schrank [5] also argues:

"As now defined, academic freedom...ignores the intersubjectivity of all persons in the setting... such an approach conceals the vulnerability of women and other historically excluded groups who are still marginal in the academy, and does not take account of the historic advantages enjoyed by white, heterosexual, able-bodied males. it does not acknowledge power imbalances in relations based on gender, race, sexuality, class, and other dimensions of difference..."

Educational strategies should be developed in a manner that could prevent any discrimination against women. Therefore, women's freedom in learning is a critical topic to be investigated, especially in the field of entrepreneurship. To many scholars, although women are improving their status in the educational systems, yet there are some nuances in their approach. For instance, as Radovic Markovic et al [6] mention in their study: "The changes in women's educational and career attainment may have multifaceted characteristics. Women might have increased their enrolment in colleges compared to men, but women may still differ in terms of the types of subjects in which they are enrolled. "

A recently done research [11] shows that the type of skill specific training might also be heavily influenced by the specific needs of a particular gender of the potential or actual entrepreneur such as in the case of women entrepreneurs. In this research, the author also see some positive effects of new modes of entrepreneurship education. Prior to exposure to traditional entrepreneurship courses, females showed significantly less entrepreneurial intention than males. This research also shows that when studying nascent entrepreneurship among college students, male students perceived themselves to be significantly more capable than females to handle entrepreneurial activities in the control group, while the difference was not significant in the entrepreneurship education group. Women tend to gravitate more towards affective learning opportunities. They also tend to attach a deeper importance to social networks and as such work more diligently than men in their development in the form of networks and key contacts. Moreover, education has been noted as one means to infuse women more concretely into the entrepreneurial experience [7] [8]. A recent study found that education plays different roles in countries' economic development at different stages [9]. For example, in a developed country, the level of education was found to be one of the significant variables affecting the performance of female enterprises [10]. Considering the importance of education for women as entrepreneurs, it has recently become evident that the new Age is looking for new forms of education, such as creative education. Creative education and training should help women to raise their creativity, logical thinking and entrepreneurial activities [11].

Namely, entrepreneurship emerges from an individual's creative spirit into long-term business ownership, job creation, and economic security. Women bring commitment and integrity because they care about economic empowerment, entrepreneurial development and innovation. The special understanding of innovation within that framework, and the role that women play in creating and commercializing that innovation is necessary. In addition, women's historically lesser degree of participation in the human capital-generating activity now or increasingly essential to innovation entrepreneurship, that being education in science, technology, mathematics, and engineering, likely obscures the need to study female entrepreneurship in this context. Whatever the causes, the study and, ultimately, the improved engagement and success of women in innovation industries, including through entrepreneurship, are urgent needs in both domestic and international economic, legal, societal, and development contexts [12].

Due to different approaches to female entrepreneurship, it can be suggested here that this field of research is considered to be very broad. Some of the theories outlined in this research can be linked to the study of this phenomenon, such as gender theories, managerial theories, public policy, etc. In our opinion, all of these approaches should be as integrated as possible in order to provide a complete understanding of female entrepreneurship. In addition, a shift in thoughts and research in the field of female entrepreneurship is also necessary. It should follow the changes in the roles and tasks of women as entrepreneurs as the main conductors of these activities, influenced by new flows of economic operation in the age of globalization. Namely, the recognition of the capacity of women

entrepreneurs in our global community is no longer a matter of debate, but is a realisation that female entrepreneurship is now forming one of the major factors contributing to the development of many countries [13]. It is also important to point out that educational strategies should be developed in a manner that could prevent any discrimination against women.

### 3 Methodology

We used Pareto model to identify what education issues need attention. Our research investigates two main questions as follows: (i) How can we encourage the entrepreneurial abilities of students through education with focus on women?, and (ii) In what direction the educational strategies should be developed?

The research methodology in this research is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. This approach, involves carrying out in-depth interviews with respondents from different countries all around the world. Also, we designed an online questionnaire to answer the research questions in a better manner. In order to collect the required data, the questionnaires were sent online to the respondents and they filled out the questionnaires and sent them back to us. It should be noted that the respondents were from four countries (i.e. from Serbia, Iran, India and United States). A self-rated questionnaire was utilized to collect the data. In sum, 95 respondents answered the questionnaire and the quantitative phase was conducted based on these data.

### 4 Research Findings

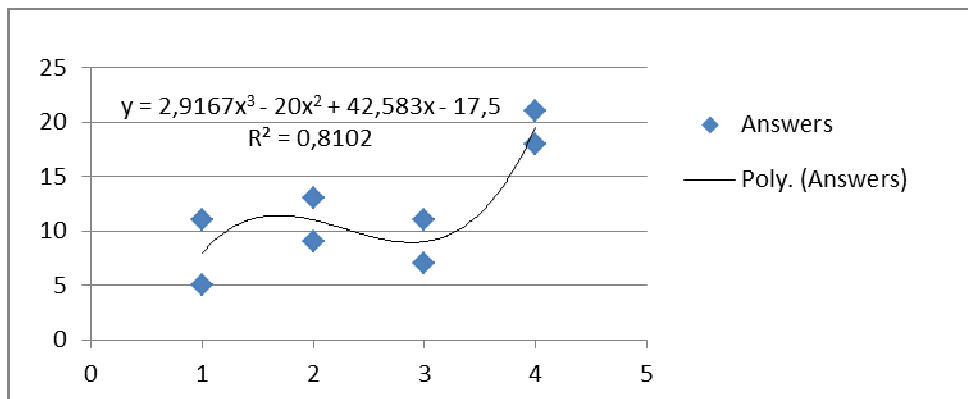
The research findings are presented according to the aforementioned research questions. Distribution of the answers is also based on the respondents' gender. After charting the frequency of the answers in our survey, it was very clear that in all considered countries the entrepreneurial abilities of students can be best fostered in an academic environment by multi dimensional relationships between course concepts and community-based entrepreneurship experiences. The results also show that there are no significant differences in responses. Namely, most of the respondents (64 out of 95) chose choice 4. Significantly, entrepreneurial abilities of students improvements positively influence toward fostering multi dimensional relationships between course concepts and community-based entrepreneurship experiences, which is showed by regression  $y = 2,916x^3 - 20x^2 + 42,8x - 17,5$  (figure 1). The findings on students perception regarding the most appropriate direction for the educational strategies to be developed in order to reach the above mentioned goal, i.e. to encourage the entrepreneurial abilities of students show that most of the respondents (73 out of 95) chose choice 2. According to students replies new educational strategies should encourage individuality and freedom of learning, which is showed by regression  $y = 2,4167x^3 - 10,5x^2 + 10,083x + 5$  (figure 3).

#### **Question 1. How can we encourage the entrepreneurial abilities of students through education?**

In this question, we were searching for the best choice to encourage the entrepreneurial abilities of students through education. The following choices were provided, according to the qualitative phase:

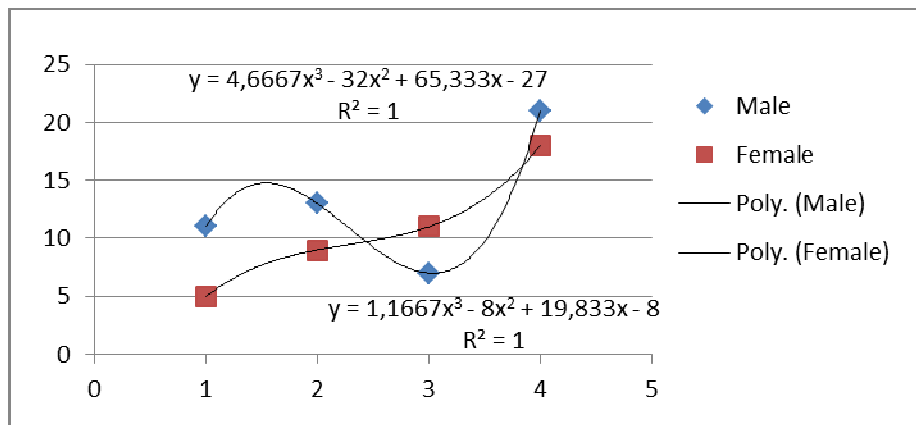
- 1) Fostering creativity through education
- 2) Offering students the tools to think originally, develop and test their business ideas
- 3) Fostering innovative personality development who creates something unique and turning it into entrepreneurial activity
- 4) Offering multi dimensional relationships between course concepts and community-based entrepreneurship experiences

Fig.1 Distribution of responses for all respondents and considered countries



Based on the chart can be seen that there is no differences between the responses observed by gender (figure 2).

Fig. 2 Distribution of responses by gender

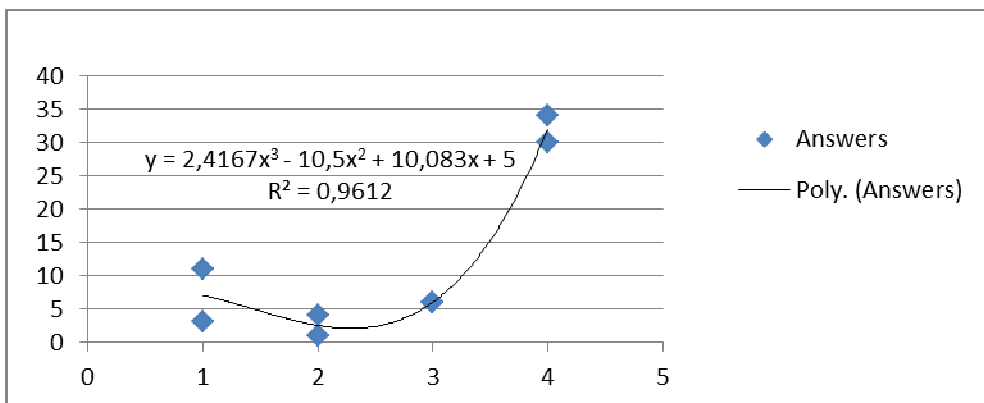


**Question 2: In what direction the educational strategies should be developed?**

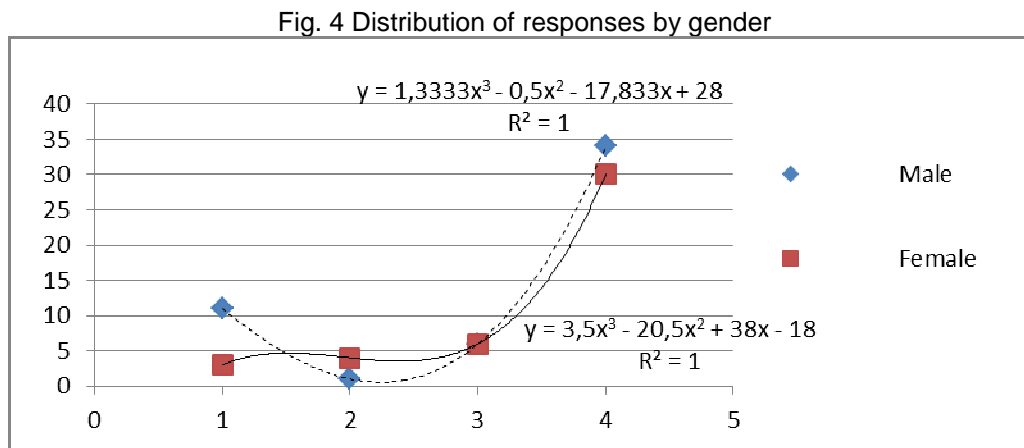
The second question was looking to find the most appropriate direction for the educational strategies to be developed in order to reach the mentioned goal to encourage the entrepreneurial abilities of students. Therefore, the following choices were provided based on the in-depth interviews:

- 1) To be more oriented towards the individual needs of students
- 2) To increase an individual's level of independence and freedom
- 3) To increase creative abilities and original thinking
- 4) All of the above

Fig. 3 Distribution of responses for all respondents and considered countries



The chart four shows as well as in chart two, that there is no differences between the responses observed by gender (figure 4).



## 5 Conclusion

The conventional educational concepts do not provide the educational curricula development in the field of entrepreneurship, meant to facilitate self-employment, the issues of closer connection of educational institutions with manufacturing and other types of organizations, the reduction of discrimination and achieving gender equality as one of the most important [14]. In the line with Millennium objectives, it is necessary enhancing various types and forms of entrepreneurship activities with special emphasis on women's entrepreneurship because of the importance of women entrepreneurship in poverty alleviation, their social role improvement and etc. In this context, in our research our intention was to show that the modern business environment should be accompanied by the change in educational environment and to call for a new women's entrepreneurship education strategy adopted to their individual needs.

Our research shows that the existing education system should be redefined as well as educational programs for women's entrepreneurship. They have to obtain multi-dimensional relationships between course concepts and community based on entrepreneurship experiences. Hence, the creative and interactive education should provide a completely new dimension of gaining knowledge. This active mode of learning provides innovative personality development who creates something unique and turning it into entrepreneurial activity. To address individual needs and to encourage the entrepreneurial activity of women learners, attention must be paid to adaptability of the curriculum and the learning environment. Furthermore, women respondents in our survey were mostly arguing about the freedom in expressing ideas and opinions, and preferred freedom in learning without religious, political, or any other kind of constraints. They also believe that fostering innovative personality development of individuals creates something unique and turn it into entrepreneurial activity. In their opinion, it is one of the most effective ways to encourage the entrepreneurial abilities of students. Interestingly, the women shared the same opinion regardless of whether they come from developed or developing countries.

Providing them more freedom in learning is critical for their self-confidence and individual development. In this direction, the new education system can reduce common existing stereotypes and help them better involvement into business environment and decision making. Namely, supply of opportunities, knowledge and technology leads to women's choices, empowerment and entrepreneurship. In addition, development of women entrepreneurship should support their economic empowerment. Consequently, empowering women by improving their economic status and providing them new opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship is necessary. It is impossible to achieve all new education advantages without support by governments, schools and women's organizations.

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