

New Challenges in Entrepreneurship: Introduction to the Special Issue

Entrepreneurship has been generating heated debates in business, politics and society, due to its major contribution for economic growth and employment creation. According to recent data, in Europe about 99.8% of all companies are small and medium enterprises, generating a substantial share of GDP and accounting for about 60% to 70% of employment (European Commission, 2003). In Portugal, this percentage is even higher, representing about 75 %.

Three main reasons explain why entrepreneurial organizations have such a positive impact on economic performance. First, entrepreneurial organizations are an important mechanism for knowledge spillover. These organizations have the capacity either to generate new knowledge or to adapt new technology and ideas developed in other enterprises. Second, entrepreneurship raises competition by increasing the number of enterprises (Porter, 1990). As new enterprises are created, new ideas are generated, promoting competition. A third way entrepreneurship exerts a positive influence on economy is through increased variety, as entrepreneurship generates a wide variety of new enterprises that are specialized in some particular new product niche.

As an academic field, entrepreneurship begun in the late 1970s, rooted on a wide set of disciplines, such as economics, psychology, management or sociology (Sexton & Landstrom, 2000). However, entrepreneurship as an academic field has been passing over multiple difficulties, given that no conceptual framework explaining and predicting relationships among variables exists yet. In contrast with other sciences, entrepreneurship remains a fragmented field of study, as it is still defining its object of study. Several authors have argued that entrepreneurship should direct attention mainly towards entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g. Venkataraman, 1997; Eckhardt & Shane, 2003), while others continue to focus on the individual entrepreneurs (e.g. Shook, Priem & McGee, 2003) or the creation of new ventures (Gartner, 1988).

As a result, multiple concepts and theories, even that contradictory, have emerged, imposing serious obstacles to a free communication among scholars studying entrepreneurship. Embracing in such variability, entrepreneurship as an academic field is delaying the development of its own identity. A clear definition of “what entrepreneurship is” and “what entrepreneurship’s main research interests are” is important to develop within entrepreneurial community, in order to establish

a distinctive, autonomous and legitimate field of study. Theoretical discussions as well as empirical studies are thus necessary to consolidate entrepreneurship as an academic field.

While establishing its own boundaries, entrepreneurship may benefit from the exchange of knowledge with other scientific areas. Entrepreneurship may provide valuable contributions to the field of organizational behavior and this one can also offer important insights to entrepreneurship researchers. Entrepreneurship may contribute to refresh the current state of the art on organizational behavior, as the majority of concepts and theories have emerged in mature and well-established organizations (Katz & Gartner, 1988). Theoretical innovation may thus be facilitated while studying entrepreneurial organizations. Moreover, because entrepreneurial organizations are younger and smaller than mature organizations, they are more flexible, innovative and prepared to change (Rauch & Frese, 2000). As such, some interesting organizational hypothesis can better be studied in entrepreneurial contexts. On the other hand, entrepreneurship may also benefit from the theoretical background of organizational behavior. For instance, leadership, which is one of the well-developed research topics in organizational behavior, may help to explain how entrepreneurs create a compelling vision of the organization, convincing employees to embrace entrepreneur's ventures. Similarly, decision-making has also been considered a central topic on the field of organizational behavior, and, if applied within entrepreneurship, may help to understand how specific persons recognize opportunities and create entrepreneurial organizations (Baron, 2002). Besides leadership and decision making, other topics from organizational behavior may also promote a better understanding of processes and variables in entrepreneurship, such as motivation or strategy, just to name a few.

With this in mind, this special issue on "New Challenges in Entrepreneurship" was prepared with the purpose of generating synergies between organizational behavior and entrepreneurship, trying to contribute to an enrichment of both areas. This special issue of **Comportamento Organizacional e Gestão** (COeG) includes both theoretical and empirical papers that cover a wide variety of topics in entrepreneurship, focusing on macro, micro and meso-level analysis of the phenomenon. Some of the papers introduce novel variables and approaches on the field, whereas others are highly systematic, contributing to a clarification of concepts as well as the central assumptions of entrepreneurship.

In the first paper, *Adelaide Baeta*, *Candido Borges* and *Diane Tremblay* address the role of incubators on the success of entrepreneurial organizations. Incubators have received ample attention in the literature on entrepreneurship due to its major importance to entrepreneurial organizations, particularly during its start-up phase. In this study, the authors evaluate the properties of technology-based incubators in Brazil, in order to implement international entrepreneurship. Their work analyzes on what extent Brazilian technology-based incubators are skilled and prepared to implement international entrepreneurship.

In the second paper, *Dana Redford* stresses another topic that has generated vigorous debate in the field: education in entrepreneurship. The author presents a study that was conducted in Portugal. More specifically, *Dana Redford* analyses the programs being offered by Portuguese universities during the 2004/2005 academic year, in order to provide a picture of the state of education on entrepreneurship in Portugal. Based on this analysis, insightful actions can be implemented.

In the third paper, *Pedro de Carvalho* and *Luis González* examine the entrepreneurial intention concept, which has been considered one of the most important variables predicting the creation of entrepreneurial ventures. The authors build a model of entrepreneurial intention, covering a wide set of entrepreneur's personal characteristics and institutional environment.

In the fourth paper, *Andreia Leiria*, *Patricia Palma* and *Miguel Cunha* discuss the implicit expectations and beliefs that both the entrepreneur and his team develop about each other, a subject matter that has received little attention in entrepreneurship research. Using a qualitative approach, the authors analyze how psychological contracts are perceived by both the entrepreneur and his team and examine what are the main factors responsible for the development of those psychological contracts in an entrepreneurial enterprise. The conclusions of this study may contribute to a more adequate management of expectations within entrepreneurial organizations, in order to increase motivation among individuals.

In the fifth paper, *Anabela Dinis* and *Ana Maria Ussman* present an extensive literature review of entrepreneurship, with a useful systematization of the field. The most influential approaches of entrepreneurship are analyzed, showing the contributions that each one has to this field of study. The authors propose an integrative framing to better understand the complex phenomenon of entrepreneurship. In this paper, the authors also suggest a new Portuguese word to define entrepreneurship, which is the term "empresarialidade". The main advantages of using this new concept are also discussed in this paper.

In the sixth paper, *Miguel Lopes*, *Miguel Cunha* and *Filipa Reis* discuss how entrepreneurs get the resources they need to build entrepreneurial organizations. It is a topic of major concern within entrepreneurship as resource gathering is a recurrent constraint that entrepreneurs face to create and develop a new venture. In this paper, the authors discuss this topic by introducing a new concept in the field of entrepreneurship: magnetic relationships. The authors also propose a framework to explain how entrepreneurs attract the critical resources they need to create a new enterprise.

In the last paper of this special issue, "Empreender na Primeira Pessoa", *Artur Nunes*, an entrepreneur, presents his experience while implementing his own enterprise. Main difficulties and successes are discussed as well as future directions for those who consider the hypothesis of becoming entrepreneurs.

In sum, the collection of papers of this special issue contributes to a better understanding of some of the processes, variables and relationship in the field of entrepreneurship. In addition, this collection of papers highlights the richness of combining theories and processes from both the entrepreneurship and the organizational behavior fields.

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