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Doctoral Dissertation  
Doctoral Program in Management, Production and Design (37<sup>th</sup> Cycle)

# **The role of Entrepreneurship Education in enhancing entrepreneurial propensity, behavior, and performance**

By

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the phenomenon of student entrepreneurship within the context of Entrepreneurship Education in universities, aiming to better understand the effectiveness of Entrepreneurship Education courses in promoting new venture creation by students. Although many universities increasingly invest resources in fostering entrepreneurial mindset, the number of businesses founded by students remains low. The relevance of this issue is underscored by the potential positive impact of youth entrepreneurship on local economic development, particularly in terms of youth employment and innovation-driven economic growth. Through three empirical studies, this thesis focuses on the effects of Entrepreneurship Education approaches—with particular attention to Challenge-Based Learning—on entrepreneurial intention, nascent entrepreneurship behavior, and the performance of student-founded businesses.

The first study investigated the effect of Challenge-Based Learning on entrepreneurial intention by comparing it with more theoretical and less practical approaches. The results showed that participation in an Entrepreneurship Education course based on Challenge-Based Learning increased the effect of entrepreneurial attitude on students' entrepreneurial intention as well as their awareness of the challenges associated with an entrepreneurial career. However, the Challenge-Based Learning approach also appears to partially reduce entrepreneurial intention, suggesting that exposure to real-world and practical challenges enables students to better grasp the complexities of entrepreneurship, contributing to a more realistic appraisal of their own aspirations.

The second study examines the role of Entrepreneurship Education in nascent entrepreneurship behavior, demonstrating that participation in Entrepreneurship Education courses amplify the effectiveness of entrepreneurial orientation on the conduct of search activities characteristic of nascent entrepreneurship. Students who engage in Entrepreneurship Education courses not only develop technical skills, such as business plan writing and market analysis, but also acquire advanced cognitive abilities, including critical thinking and opportunity recognition. These findings suggest that Entrepreneurship Education not only enhances practical competencies but also heightens awareness of the importance of foundational activities for emerging entrepreneurs.

The third study focused on the effect of Entrepreneurship Education on the performance of student-founded businesses. The results showed that participation in Entrepreneurship Education courses had a positive effect on a range of performance indicators, including sales growth, market share growth, job creation

and innovativeness. This effect suggests that Entrepreneurship Education equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to manage their enterprises effectively, thereby improving both the management and growth potential of student businesses.

The results have important implications for a range of stakeholders. For example, universities may benefit from incorporating more practical elements into Entrepreneurship Education, such as Challenge-Based Learning that enables students to tackle problems, apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios and develop a sense of choosing an entrepreneurial career. Entrepreneurship Education has shown positive effects on both job creation and performance, particularly in terms of job creation and innovativeness. Supporting the expansion of Entrepreneurship Education in universities through targeted policies could act as a catalyst for local economic growth, encouraging the rise of young, innovative enterprises capable of generating economic and social value.