

Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Intentions among Sri Lankan Undergraduates

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The government has taken several steps to address unemployment problem among youths in Sri Lanka. Many authors have identified entrepreneurial intentions as a mean to better explain and predict entrepreneurship. One strategy is to promote entrepreneurship education and to encourage to start their own enterprises. However, despite of the fact that most of Sri Lankan state universities have initiated entrepreneurship courses in their curricular, little research has been undertaken to examine whether a relationship exists between students taking courses in entrepreneurial development and their intention of becoming entrepreneurs. The objective of the paper is to examine the entrepreneurial intentions of Sri Lankan undergraduates in the state universities.

Quantitative as well as qualitative data obtained from seven state universities in Sri Lanka viz Colombo, Peradeniya, Sri Jayewardenepura, Kelaniya, Ruhuna, Jaffna and Moratuwa and Uva Wellassa universities which offers industry oriented degree programmes have been selected to the sampling frame. Sub-samples from each university were drawn proportionate to the annual intake of 2014. In order to minimize margin of error (1%), 503 state university final year undergraduates were randomly selected by stratifying the sample frame into major subject disciplines (excluding Law and Medicine). The Entrepreneurial Intentions Questionnaire (EIQ) which was developed based on Ajzen's three antecedents was the main data collection tool. Frequency count, percentages, ANOVA, chi-square tests, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) techniques were used for data analyzing and the model fitting.

The study found that entrepreneurial intention levels of Science and Engineering undergraduates were comparatively lower than IT/Computer Science, Management

and Agriculture undergraduates. Specifically, Physical Science students demonstrated lowest mean score for the entrepreneurial intention level. Attitude towards entrepreneurship, perceived behavioural control, entrepreneurial education and subjective norms emerged as the most important factors in determining the level of entrepreneurial intention. The study further found that exposure to entrepreneurship education influences students' intentions of becoming self-employed. It was however discovered that most students were not very confident about their intentions due to fear of capital, failure, and lack of experience in business management. The study concludes that despite knowledge of entrepreneurship education as a contributing factor in the reduction of unemployment, Sri Lankan youth undergraduates require additional supports such as sufficient capital, conducive environment and different levels of supports.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Undergraduates, Sri Lankan.*