

*Magdalena Raczyńska, Adam Krystian Wiśniewski\**

## ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDES AMONG STUDENTS. RESEARCH RESULTS

**A b s t r a c t:** The article raises the issue of entrepreneurship. It presents the essence of the issue and its conditions, emphasizing especially the role of education. The paper quoted the study carried out among students of management and economics of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. Further analysis of the results allowed the evaluation of the students' knowledge of entrepreneurship and their subjective assessment of its usefulness in starting their own company. Moreover, the respondents highlighted the key motives and barriers they perceive when establishing business.

**K e y w o r d s:** entrepreneurship among students, entrepreneurial attitude, entrepreneurship conditions.

**K l a s y f i k a c j a J E L:** L21

### INTRODUCTION

The basis of building a competitive, based on knowledge<sup>2</sup> economy is to shape an entrepreneurial society. This fact has been already noticed by J.A. Schumpeter in the 1930's, by recognising entrepreneurship as one of the most important factors of economic development [Witek, Niedzielski, 2012, p. 7].

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\* Adres do korespondencji: Magdalena Raczyńska, Adam Krystian Wiśniewski, Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie, Wydział Nauk Ekonomicznych, Katedra Organizacji i Zarządzania ul. Michała Oczapowskiego 2, 10-719 Olsztyn, e-mail: [misiewicz.magdalena@gmail.com](mailto:misiewicz.magdalena@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> Economy based on knowledge (knowledge-based economy) is a term of the modern economy, in which knowledge is understood as the ability to act and play a decisive role in stimulating economic and social development of each region [Matusiak, 2005, p. 57-59].

In Poland, entrepreneurial development has been undoubtedly stepped-up at the beginning of the 1990's, during the political and system transformation. If we consider the amount of enterprises in the SME sector as the entrepreneurship index of a given country, it can be noticed that in 1989-1992 the number of small registered enterprises has grown almost threefold, from 572,451 to 1,496,797 [Nogalski et al., 2004, p. 22 – 23].

For years, scientist have been asking the question if entrepreneurial attitude, resulting in, among others, undertaking economic activity, is natural, or if it is a consequence of the respective socialization process<sup>1</sup>. Currently, a dominating view is that education plays a major role in developing the entrepreneurial attitude, and the earlier the person begins preparation for being entrepreneurial, the larger the chance that the person will be able to internalise appropriate values, skills or character traits [Kowalska-Żakieta, Kutuło, 2007, p. 161-162]. An incredibly important role in shaping the entrepreneurial attitudes is thus played by family, as well as the education system on different levels, including university.

Institutions of higher education can support entrepreneurship by, among others, offering subjects, which encourage to develop an entrepreneurial attitude and show the students that conducting their own enterprise may be an attractive career development path [Targalski et al., 2007, p. 90]<sup>2</sup>. These subjects more often depart from the traditional lecture, adopting a character of forms that activate conceptual and organisational independence of students, such as trainings, simulation games, case studies, staging and others [Bizon et al., 2012, p. 2; Olearnik, 2007, p. 116]. Moreover, institutions of higher education are the disposal of tools, other than the typical implementation of didactic tasks, in order to shape entrepreneurial attitudes. We are talking about, among others, the activity of scientific student clubs, internships, organising different types of contests, promoting student activity, cooperating with the institutions from business environment or the academic business incubators [Olearnik, 2007, p. 117-119].

The goal of this paper is to bring the essence of entrepreneurship and indicate factors that condition the entrepreneurial attitude, especially among young people. Also, on the basis of a research conducted among students of management and economics at the University of Warmia and Mazury, the authors try to give an answer on students' knowledge about entrepreneurship, their subjective assessment of the usefulness of knowledge acquired during their studies in this field when starting their own companies and the perceived motives and barriers of conducting business activity.

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, Peter Drucker indicates that entrepreneurship in an organisation is more a matter of motives and practice than personality [Targalski et al., 2007, p. 91].

<sup>2</sup> The unquestionable leaders in the field of educating students of higher education in the range of entrepreneurship are American institutions, on which background the scientific achievements of the Western European academia appear to be modest [Cieślak, 2007, p. 71].

## 1. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ITS CONDITIONS

Entrepreneurship can be described very simply as the art of coping with various life situations and the complexity of the category makes the issue of entrepreneurship be considered by many sciences, such as, among others, economics, psychology, sociology and anthropology [Kunasz, 2008, p. 65].

According to Kraśnicka „entrepreneurship is a special kind of human activity, acting individually or within an organization, involving the use of emerging opportunities in the environment through the implementation of projects (innovation, the creation of new organizations or the renewal of existing ones) that bring the economic or non-economic effects to their entities and to their surroundings” [Kraśnicka, 2002, p. 14].

Entrepreneurship can be analyzed in terms of the process (as business creation) or as an attitude or behavior of a given unit [Klonowska-Matynia, Palinkiewicz, 2013, p. 30].

Recognizing entrepreneurship as an attitude underlines the importance of characteristics of an entrepreneur, his personality, abilities, general knowledge and those concerning the functioning of markets. It can also be understood as the identified, specific ways of reaction and willingness to take action [Piecuch, 2010, p. 38-39].

An entrepreneurial attitude is composed of three elements [Białasiewicz, 2008, p. 9]:

- emotional: moods and feelings;
- behavioral: predisposition to certain behaviors in certain situations;
- cognitive: the information, opinions, knowledge, skills.

Adopted attitude determines behavior and affects its efficiency. Entrepreneurial behavior is conditioned by different needs of a person and personality traits, and is expressed by the adopted goals, aspirations and results in actions taken by the person [Piecuch, 2010, p. 41-42].

In the literature, the most popular concept of entrepreneurship is the process approach, meaning the creation of new ventures.

The decision about starting own business and the actual implementation of this plan has a variety of conditions, but undoubtedly is a consequence of attitudes, determined by various and numerous internal (personal predispositions) or external factors (i.e. education system, situation on the labour market or the characteristics of the local environment). Combination of these two types of factors creates a specific „social climate” that affects the specific behavior of people. The authors decided to concentrate on the external conditions of entrepreneurship, especially on the role of education in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes.

It is proven that the higher the stage of education is, the more beneficial

effect it has on the creation of entrepreneurial attitude of a person [Piróg, 2014, p. 307]. It is assumed that the acquisition of a wide range of competencies during the learning process motivates people to self-employ and minimizes, especially at the initial stage, the costs of the launched business [Henley, 2009, p. 18]. As it was mentioned, the stage of education has got a significant effect on the entrepreneurial attitude that one can develop. Various empirical research confirm that the probability of starting own business is higher among the university graduates than among people who are worse educated [Piróg, 2014, p. 308]. On the other hand, there are many skeptics questioning this argument, saying that the higher the level of education of a person is, the more probable it is that he or she will find a job that is attractively paid. And young people are often aware of a fact, that in the initial period of a start-up functioning, the level of an income gained can be less than satisfactory. As an example, different researches carried out in Sweden, Greece or Great Britain revealed, that self-employment was much more popular among people with primary education than among people with higher education, who considered working for an independent employer as a way of bringing higher financial benefits [Greene, Saridakis, 2008, p. 660-662; Livanos, 2009, p. 229-231].

Another, exemplary factor that can determine the entrepreneurial attitudes is the situation on the labour market. It is assumed that if the situation is stable and safe, people with higher education will be less willing to start their own business. This argument is the main assumption of the „push” theory, according to which high unemployment rate has a positive effect on self-employment. Although the indicated difficulties on the labour market can stimulate everyone, regardless the education level, still the competences of the university graduates can be some additional stimulus for taking these kind of actions [Piróg, 2014, p. 309-310]<sup>3</sup>.

Also the situation of the local market, as a determinant of shaping some desired entrepreneurial attitudes among people, is worth mentioning here. As for the local factors related to the specifics of a particular location in which some business initiatives are there to be taken, they are, among others such determinants of entrepreneurship like: demographic potential of the place, the local labor market, the size of unemployment, capital resources of the population, market capacity, technical infrastructure of local importance, the state of the natural environment, the aspirations of the local community, competence and resilience of local government, business support institutions, traditions of entrepreneurship development etc. [Kamińska, 2006, p. 52].

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<sup>3</sup> Opposite to „push” theory is the „prosperity pull” one. According to the second mentioned theory, only the stable and safe labour market with low level of unemployment rate encourage people to self-employ [Amit, Muller, 1995, p. 65].

## 2. RESEARCH RESULTS

The following research, where the respondents included the students of management and economics of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, was carried out from March to June 2015. The research questionnaire was addressed to the students of the third year of undergraduate studies and the freshman year of complementary master studies who attended „Entrepreneurship” or Entrepreneurship-related lectures and/or classes (discussing the issues in question) during the years prior to the research. The size of the research sample was 190 people. The questionnaires were verified in terms of whether they were filled in a proper way. 179 sheets were qualified for further analysis. Over 70% of the respondents were women. Moreover, the students of complementary master studies in management were in the majority (68.7%). The respondents had fairly limited professional experience. Only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of them declared having professional experience of over 1 year. The work experience of the rest was less than a year (30.7%) or none (41.9%).

During the first stage of the research, the participants were asked whether they were familiar with the concept of “entrepreneurship”. The vast majority – as many as 132 people (73.74%) – stated that they were fully aware of its meaning. The rest (47 people) indicated that they were familiar to some extent; no respondent declared complete unfamiliarity with the concept.

The next question (multiple choice) was to provide the necessary attributes of an entrepreneurial person. The distribution of answers is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Attributes of an entrepreneurial person according to the respondents

Attribute	No. of indications
Iniciative	84
Willingness to take risk	134
Belief in their own abilities	82
High problem-solving skills	122
Being active	96
Creativity	163
Being full of ideas	82
Openess	53
Other	1

Source: Own work based on research results.

The most popular attributes were: creativity (163 respondents), willingness to take risks (134), and high problem-solving skills (122). The least po-

pular feature associated with entrepreneurship was openness (53 answers). One person said: “having a broad knowledge of the available sources of financing”.

Next, the respondents were asked to say whether they considered themselves to be entrepreneurial. The results are presented in table 2 (by gender).

Table 2. Number of respondents declaring themselves as being entrepreneurial

Answer	Gender	No. of indications	% of indications
Yes	Female (F)	41	32%
	Male (M)	21	41,2%
	TOTAL	62	34,6%
I may not be an entrepreneurial person yet but I am learning how to become one	F	6	4,7%
	M	1	2%
	TOTAL	7	3,9%
It is difficult to say	F	52	40,6%
	M	19	37,2%
	TOTAL	71	39,7%
No	F	29	22,7%
	M	10	19,6%
	TOTAL	39	21,8%

Source: Own work based on research results.

The research shows that only one third (34.6%) of the respondents thought of themselves as entrepreneurial. Interestingly, it was mostly men who believed they were resourceful (41.2%), not women (only 32%). Almost 40% of the participants were not able to answer this question, and their response was “difficult to say”. 21.8% believed they did not display any attributes of an enterprising person. Again, although the differences in this area are not significant, it was mostly women who did not believe they were enterprising (22.7% of responses); in the case of men, it was 19.6%.

The students were also asked whether they intended to start their own business in the future. What is interesting, 22.6% of the respondents said they did not have any plans for their professional career yet. However, as many as 72.9% of the participants were considering such a scenario, while only 4.5% were not interested in the idea. Gender differences can be observed here, too. As many as 92.2% of male students were not ruling out running their own business in the future. This percentage was “only” 64.8% in the case of female respondents. Overall, the results suggest that running own business is seriously considered as a career path.

Unfortunately, the study shows that the students hardly felt prepared to run their own company. Almost half (46.9%) of the students admitted they did not feel they were ready for having their own business. Only 1/4 of the respondents declared to be ready, with less than 5% being certain of it. Could it be that the University and its system of business education are among the factors causing this dominant sense of being unprepared for one's own business among the respondents? The research results seem to validate this thesis, as the students were asked to assess the usefulness of the knowledge acquired during studies in running a business, and only 8.5% felt it was very useful in this respect. More than half of the respondents (53.4%) stated it was moderately useful, while 33.7% and 4.4%, respectively, said it was useful only to a small extent and not useful at all. What barriers to starting a business were mentioned by the students in addition to lack of sufficient knowledge? The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Barriers of starting own business according to respondents<sup>4</sup>

Factor	No. of indications
Fear of failure	60
Lack of knowledge about the trade	17
High labor costs	33
No business ideas	4
Lack of support from the family and friends	17
Stress related to running own business	18
No time related to continuing education	22
Fear of not having any clients	64
Fear of debt	71
Fear of excessive red tape in public institutions	60
Lack of knowledge about setting up and running a company	43
Lack of knowledge on how to obtain funds	24
Lack of sufficient financial resources to set up a business	131

Source: Own work based on research results.

Although reported quite often (43 and 24 answers respectively), lack of knowledge about setting up and running a company and lack of knowledge on how to obtain funds were not, in the students' opinion, the biggest obstacles. What proved to be the key problem were financial issues. Lack of sufficient financial resources to set up a business was the most frequently reported factor (131 responses). Next, the students mentioned: fear of debt (71 responses) and fear of not having any clients (64 responses). Other important barriers included:

<sup>4</sup> Respondents could choose multiple answers.

fear of excessive red tape in public institutions and fear of failure, which yielded 60 answers each. The least important impediment reported was the interim period during which one has no business ideas – there were only 4 answers like this.

Despite noticing many alarming barriers to starting and running a business, the students also saw a number of advantages of having a company, hence so many respondents considering this form of employment in the future. These advantages are listed in table 4.

Table 4. Motives of starting own business according to respondents<sup>5</sup>

Factor	No. of indications
Willingness to take risk	18
Family tradition	9
Fear of being unable to find a job after graduation	56
The desire to make better use of existing knowledge and skills	31
Having an idea for one's own business	29
Flexible working hours	90
Possibility of pursuing one's own passions	85
Possibility of self-employment	107
The possibility of obtaining bigger earnings	129
Other	5

Source: Own work based on research results.

The research shows that the primary reason behind so many respondents thinking about opening their own firm was because they believed their own business could give them bigger earnings than working a regular full-time job (129 answers). Other benefits included the possibility of self-employment (107 responses) and flexible working hours (giving them independence from the employer) (90 responses). Another important factor inspiring a decision about running one's own business was the possibility of pursuing one's own passions, followed by fear of being unable to find a job after graduation (85 and 56 responses respectively). The aspects making the students feel the least encouraged to conduct their own business was risk (18 responses) and family tradition (9 responses). This attitude is not surprising given the results of various studies on the expectations of Generation Y – to which the respondents belong. According to the report called "Generation Y and the world of work," the main reason why the generation's representatives start a job is money, and the way to earn it is largely through self-employment (81% of the respondents declared a desire to run their

<sup>5</sup> Respondents could choose multiple answers.



own business). In addition, the report also indicates that flexible working hours were seen as a significant benefit of self-employment.

## SUMMARY

Entrepreneurship (also of young people), understood both as a declarative readiness to start a business, the conviction of having competences in this field, as well as the actual self-employment, is seen as a positive factor for development of a country. It increases, among others, innovation economy and the probability of creating new jobs. Education is vital in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes and is one of the factors directly determining them. In the reports prepared for the European Commission, Poland was highly rated in terms of the implementation of recommendations in the field of entrepreneurial education, primarily due to the introduction of a compulsory subject „Introduction to Entrepreneurship” in secondary schools, and of related courses at some fields of study [Wach, 2007, p. 122]. Unfortunately, the conducted research described in this article exhibited that students feel that knowledge acquired at universities only moderately prepared them to run their own business, which may indicate a failure of the system of higher education. Moreover, the study showed that students are familiar with the concept of „entrepreneurship” but only every third respondent would describe themselves as entrepreneurial. Despite this, the vast majority of respondents would like to run their own business in the future, noting the many benefits associated with it, including the option of obtaining greater earnings than while working full-time for an independent entrepreneur, the opportunity to work in a profession related to their interests or to have flexible working hours. As the obstacles which may stand in the way of achieving success, students most frequently mentioned lack of resources for starting own business and fear of becoming indebted. These problems and requirements of young people may be solved by relevant institutions that through introduction of various tools (such as business incubators) can provide effective support to young people wishing to develop their professional ideas.

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## POSTAWY PRZEDSIĘBIORCZE WŚRÓD STUDENTÓW. WYNIKI BADAŃ

**Zarys treści:** Artykuł porusza kwestię przedsiębiorczości. Przedstawiono istotę problemu i jego warunków, podkreślając zwłaszcza rolę edukacji. W artykule zaprezentowano wnioski z badania przeprowadzonego wśród studentów zarządzania i ekonomii z Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie. Dalsza analiza wyników pozwoliła na ocenę wiedzy studentów przedsiębiorczości i ich subiektywnej oceny jego przydatności w założeniu własnej firmy. Ponadto respondenci wskazali główne motywy i bariery, jakie postrzegają przy ustalaniu działalności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przedsiębiorczość wśród studentów, postawa przedsiębiorcza, warunków przedsiębiorczości.

