



## Research paper

## Exploring the relationship between entrepreneurial behavior and teachers' job satisfaction

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- We propose a novel study on competency-based entrepreneurship and its link to educational job satisfaction.
- We found a moderate correlation between entrepreneurial behavior and teachers' job satisfaction.
- Teachers' gender and highest degree achieved display important effects on their entrepreneurial behavior.
- We discuss both theoretical and practical implications of the study.

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 22 August 2016

Received in revised form

17 December 2016

Accepted 2 January 2017

## Keywords:

Competency-based

Entrepreneurship

Demographic characteristics

Teachers' job satisfaction

## ABSTRACT

This exploratory study has two goals: exploring the relationship between entrepreneurial behavior and job satisfaction among teachers, and identifying the demographic characteristics associated with both variables. Using a snowball technique, a sample of 385 K-12 Brazilian teachers from public and private schools responded to the survey. Statistical analysis revealed a moderate correlation between entrepreneurial behavior and job satisfaction. Results also show that gender and educational level are associated with entrepreneurial behavior. The discussion includes theoretical and practical implications.

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## 1. Introduction

The value of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial thinking is evident in most countries, where innovative, enterprising individuals are highly respected and often perceived as key engines for regional economic growth and development (Fritsch & Wyrwich, 2016). Consider Henry Ford and Steve Jobs, who have defined the entrepreneur as someone starting a new business or taking advantage of cutting-edge technology to make financial gains (Maranto, 2015). The term “entrepreneur” has been in use since the 1700s to describe “a rational decision maker who assumes the risk and provides management for the firm” (Carland, Hoy, & Carland, 1988, p. 33).

Despite the term's longevity, alternate definitions abound in current literature. Entrepreneurs, according to Tülüce and Yurtkur (2015), take advantage of opportunities and use innovation and technology to achieve advancement in the marketplace. For Borasi and Finnigan (2010), entrepreneurship converts knowledge into endeavors that provide value, whether financial, scholastic, or communal in nature. Petersen (2014) defines the entrepreneur as an individual with the vision to start a new organization or business in response to opportunities that make a difference in people's lives. These definitions may hold true for business entrepreneurship; however, the educational field needs a more attentive look.

Entrepreneurship in education has received increased attention in recent years, from both scholars and practitioners (Chand, 2014; Omer Attali & Yemini, 2016). Van Dam, Schipper, and Runhaar (2010) define entrepreneurship as a behavior “that involves recognizing opportunities and marshaling the resources to take advantage of, and acting upon these opportunities” (p. 966). Within the

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educational setting, entrepreneurial behavior has to do with the ability to effectively explore innovative ideas, stimulate students to think critically and creatively, continuously search for new developments in areas connected to the educational field, develop compelling technology-based projects inside and outside the classroom, and find the necessary resources to implement students' learning (Van Dam et al., 2010). Teachers are not expected simply to be sources of knowledge, but rather to develop entrepreneurial actions towards building a better educational system, thereby influencing their roles and general conduct. They are expected to identify and seek opportunities, take initiative and display proactive behavior to seize those opportunities, and take calculated risks in order to succeed (Onstenk, 2003; Tolentino, 1998; Van Dam et al., 2010).

Moreover, educators are also constantly perceived as role models for their students (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007), from whom—as future employees—entrepreneurial behavior is increasingly requested, from both young startup companies as well as established organizations. In that sense, teachers can exert important influence over their students' careers by displaying solid entrepreneurial-oriented skills and competencies in the classroom. This type of teacher behavior might also spark students' interest in initiating their projects and executing their own ideas since it provides interaction with people with same interests or “like themselves” (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1994; Oppedisano & Laird, 2006).

Furthermore, entrepreneurship has been widely explored from both trait-based (Chell, 1985, 2000; Cools & den Broeck, 2007; Zhang et al., 2009) and competency-based perspectives. The trait-based view heavily relies on the idea that entrepreneurs are born with certain characteristics rather than developing them with training and experience, whereas the competency-based view highlights competencies that can be cultivated through proper training (Van Dam et al., 2010). The competency-based view shows some advantages related to the possibility of recognizing and assessing its occurrence, with relevant implications for practitioners (Hayton & Kelley, 2006; Van Dam et al., 2010). Therefore, we have adopted the competency-based perspective in this paper as a fundamental theoretical framework.

Since teachers are key elements to influencing student achievement within educational systems (Hoekstra, 2014) and teachers' satisfaction leads to better retention and effective instruction, satisfied teachers are directly associated with enhanced educational outcomes (Hoekstra, 2014; Song & Mustafa, 2015). Furthermore, many studies have been devoted to understanding the relationship between entrepreneurship/self-employment and job satisfaction (e.g. Bradley & Roberts, 2004; Carree & Verheul, 2012; Lange, 2012; Rietveld, Hessels, & Van Der Zwan, 2015; Sankelo & Åkerblad, 2009; Yetim & Yetim, 2006). However there is little literature examining the link between entrepreneurship and job satisfaction in education, and even less when considering the K-12 public school system. Therefore, this research aims to explore the relationship between entrepreneurial behavior and job satisfaction among teachers, and identifying the demographic characteristics associated with both variables.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Entrepreneurship in education

While the idea of entrepreneurship has been around for many years, connecting it to education is a much more recent phenomenon (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010). While the general definitions of entrepreneurship include bringing together ideas, capital and resources, or empowerment and creativity (Ali, Topping, & Tariq, 2009; Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Foote, 2012; Maranto, 2015),

educational entrepreneurs are described as altruistic, ideological, and wanting to make a difference by impacting and improving the academic environment and responding to students' needs (Aurini & Quirke, 2011; Maranto, 2015). Foote (2012) sees educational entrepreneurs as idea people who bring resources, empowerment, passion, and excitement into the classroom while creating solutions to educational problems. Maranto (2015) describes the educational entrepreneur as someone who sees public service as a quasi-religious calling, who is the antithesis of conventional organization, who sees problems that others do not, and who devises novel solutions to those problems. Sharra (2005) portrays educational entrepreneurship as a desire to solve social problems, pioneer change, and promote community service. Webber and Scott (2008) define it as a strategic focus incorporating planning, responsible and timely decision-making, and networking in order to create opportunities for learning. The general idea behind these varied definitions is that the educational entrepreneur is less concerned with material gains while managing scarce resources and employing creative teaching strategies for the betterment of their students.

More recently, terms such as “edu-preneur” (Foote, 2012) and “teacherpreneurship” (Davis, 2009) have begun to appear in literature, and the characteristics associated with this concept are being studied and quantified. Several studies have been published with compelling results. Aurini and Quirke (2011) conducted 80 interviews with school organizations in Canada to determine how educational entrepreneurs interpret market competition and respond to it. Market theory supposes that competition makes organizations respond with services differentiated from, and better than, their competitors. However, this study found that educational entrepreneurs were largely unaware of their competition and more concerned with ideological commitments than with market forces. Ali et al. (2009) surveyed 516 prospective teachers in Pakistan, exploring their entrepreneurial inclinations and analyzing the factors of entrepreneurialism. The subjects were positively disposed toward entrepreneurship. Through factor analysis, this survey identified three predominant factors: entrepreneurial intent and acceptability, entrepreneurial effort, and entrepreneurial motivation. It also revealed a high demand for entrepreneurship courses in the training of prospective teachers. Borasi and Finnigan (2010) reported on six case studies of educators in the United States who have become successful change agents using entrepreneurial concepts. Using cross-analysis of these case studies, they identified ten behaviors and attitudes—such as creative thinking and networking skills—that contributed to the educators' success and that they suggest being included in teacher preparation or professional development courses (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010). These studies are opening up new avenues, not only for prospective teachers, but also for frustrated educators seeking autonomy from dictated conventions such as teaching to the test and orchestrated curricula (Gunzenhauser, 2013).

Looking more closely at characteristics of the entrepreneur, Van Dam et al. (2010) questioned 251 teachers in the Netherlands and investigated six competencies expected to contribute to teachers' entrepreneurial behavior: entrepreneurial knowledge, career adaptability, occupational self-efficacy, creative thinking, networking skills, and teamwork skills. The results of this study showed that career adaptability and creative thinking were strongly linked to teacher's entrepreneurial behavior, while entrepreneurial knowledge, networking skills, and teamwork skills were less strong yet still significant. Interestingly, occupational self-efficacy did not have a significant outcome on teachers' entrepreneurial behavior. Based on these findings, Van Dam et al. (2010) argue that educational entrepreneurs can be developed, and vocational education programs should incorporate this development in their curricula to provide

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