

## **Entrepreneurship Education in Post-Soviet States**

### **Developing Programmes for Hospitality and Tourism Students in Samarkand**

#### **Abstract**

##### **Purpose**

This paper considers a country-context where traditional entrepreneurship has not been a major part of the economy and considers current attempts to develop entrepreneurship education (EE) as a part of wider market development.

##### **Approach**

We review the background to the economic development of the Post-Soviet states and link this to existing knowledge around EE. The potential routes by which EE might be developed in Uzbekistan are discussed with a focus upon hospitality and tourism education, leading to the development of a model of the six key aspects of change.

##### **Findings**

The potential for future research is explored and four aspects are highlighted as areas where partnership working with overseas Universities is likely to have substantive benefits. In particular, the development of quality standards and staff development are areas where partnership could have an important influence, whereas barriers within local systems and cultural resistance are likely to benefit less from a partnership approach. Whilst entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurial intent are both important, entrepreneurial intent is highlighted given its role in terms of individual responses to country-level initiatives.

##### **Practical Implications**

Whilst all four aspects merit further research, the paper ends with a specific suggestion that future research should draw on the theory of planned behaviour to explore entrepreneurial intent.

##### **Originality**

Uzbekistan is a relatively under-researched area where hospitality and tourism industries are under-going a period of intense development.

##### **Keywords**

Entrepreneurship education, Uzbekistan, entrepreneurial competencies, entrepreneurial ecosystem, entrepreneurial intent

##### **Article Classification – General Review**

## Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the formation of 15 independent states in 1991 (Zbigniew, W., 2015). These states were classified into regions or blocks based on geographical location including the Balkans comprising of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania (Bradshaw and Linn, 1994) and Central Asia, which is made up of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Caucasus made up of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and Russia, which forms the largest economy and a major influence. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 the former post-Soviet states worked towards transitioning to market economies (Lenchuk, 2006), with varying degrees of success. This has been broadly beneficial to the countries of Central Asia, to some extent driven by natural resources and labour. Central Asia generally recovered from the transitional economic recession in the late 1990s, and during the 2000s has emerged as one of the most dynamic economic regions in the world (Batsaikan and Dabbrowski, 2017).

The resource rich countries of Central Asia have already achieved or are approaching the upper middle-income status, largely due to strong demand for their natural resources, but the picture varies widely in different countries. Trade policy regimes, for example, vary throughout Central Asia from relatively liberal in the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, to quite restrictive in Uzbekistan (Qadris, 2017). While tariffs are not particularly restrictive by global standards, tariff structures are complex, and changes are not transparent or predictable and non-tariff measures are extensive and pervasive (Qadris, 2017). Similarly, trade within Central Asia, a large part of which is informal, has declined in importance but remains critical for some countries and sectors (Imomnazar, 2018). Beyond hydrocarbons and key commodities (cotton, aluminium, etc.), the production structures in most of the countries are quite similar which limits the potential for intra-regional trade (Batsaikan and Dabbrowski, 2017). Uzbekistan itself is one of the largest miners of gold, copper deposits and uranium deposits in the world (Chatterjee, 2018 and Khan, 2018). However, the country's economy depends mainly on the agricultural sector. The two main crops are wheat mainly for domestic use and cotton as the main export product (Malik and Shah, 2017). The most common job openings found in the labour market of Uzbekistan are ones from the following sectors: sales (office work); accounting, finance, and business economics; administrative personnel; internet, IT, telecommunications, and communication; manufacturing, agriculture (Moldazhanova *et al*, 2019). Uzbekistan also has a partially developed tourism industry, focussed on a wide variety of historical, archaeological, and religious sites and tourism has considerable potential for future development. Entrepreneurialism is considered a key factor that will underpin tourism development, via the development of new businesses that welcome international guests but

the embedding of EE in the educational curricula in Uzbekistan is a challenging shift in perspective and pedagogy for both staff and students. The development of EE is also likely to be influenced by the developing culture of post-Soviet Uzbekistan and, potentially, cultural resistance, in the evolving cultural context of post-Soviet Uzbekistan and this is likely to be an on-going theme within research. This paper looks at entrepreneurship education and the way it can be developed within Uzbekistan, drawing on themes common to the post-Soviet states and those unique to Uzbekistan.

### **Entrepreneurship education**

Entrepreneurship education (EE) equips students with the necessary knowledge (Matlay, 2019), skills and competence to make decisions in their business and cultural environment and equips students to seize opportunities in the pursuit of social and or economic activities (Schmidt and Molkentin, 2015). EE comprises of two main principles, firstly, a view that education is oriented to the development of students' entrepreneurial attitudes and skills but is not directly oriented to the creation of a new enterprise (European Union, 2012). People with EE are more likely to set up their own companies (Rushworth et al, 2016). The second principle is the development of entrepreneurship competence in educational process, accompanied by the creation and management of a new enterprise, playing entrepreneurial games, and attending student business clubs (European Union, 2016). EE is not solely related to knowledge and skills development but also entrepreneurship applies to both individuals and groups and it refers to value creation in the private, public and third sectors (QAA, 2018). EE has evolved beyond business, there several new categories such as social entrepreneurship, green entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurship are relatively new areas of focus, and the sustainability education agenda (Matlay, 2018).

Whilst EE has provoked considerable discussion, and the extent to which entrepreneurship can really be taught is a polarised debate, several key facets have been identified within the literature. The development of entrepreneurial behaviours and responsible entrepreneurship are highlighted by Duran-Sanchez *et al*, 2019; Nyadu-Addo and Mavis Serwah, 2018, Duval-Couetil and Long, 2014 and McGuigan, 2016, whereas authors that include Hjorth and Johannisson (2007) and the EU (2012) focus on the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and competences necessary to achieve the goals they set out for themselves). Notably, non-business higher education scholars have continued to acknowledge the added value of fostering entrepreneurial competence among students and the need for lifelong learning (Kurilova, *et al*, 2019). As a result, the number of courses, programmes, summer schools and

positions in EE in Europe has grown rapidly, alongside EE within formalised programmes of business education (Kurilova *et al*, 2019).

In taking the general principles of EE and developing programmes of education for Uzbekistan it becomes important to ask which actors play key roles and how these different facets can be brought to the table within the education setting. Research by Peltonen (2015) reminds us of the overwhelming importance of the teacher's role in the transformation of ideas of what entrepreneurship and being entrepreneurial means in the education environment. This requires adopting entrepreneurial pedagogy, designing suitable curricula, providing innovative learning environment, building networks and entrepreneurial learning culture within their educational institution (Peltonen, 2015), but the challenges for educators should not be underestimated. Tried and tested responses, including developing robust network-links that accept the overwhelming importance of the teacher in developing the educational experience, but acknowledge the vital contribution of input from entrepreneurs, business owners, charity founders, policy makers and many others into the classroom and the lecture hall, are in the very earliest stages of development in Uzbekistan.

One of the challenges in developing EE within Uzbekistan is that much of the research in EE is dependent on the experience and success of economically developed countries. However, research also highlights that education in entrepreneurship and management is one of the key factors why countries and institutions successfully complete the transition period to market economy (Kryvoruchko, 2018). Part of the fundamental purpose of EE is to enhance enterprising competencies of students who can identify opportunities and developing ventures (European Union,2016), through becoming self-employed, setting up new businesses or developing and growing part of an existing venture (McManus, 2014). In this sense EE focuses on the application of enterprising competencies and extends the learning environment into realistic risk environments that may include legal issues, funding issues, start-up, and growth strategies (McManus,2014). It also appears that students with both enterprise and entrepreneurship competencies may apply their abilities in a range of different contexts, including new or existing businesses, charities, on-governmental organisations, the public sector, and social enterprises (Randma and Venesaar,2016). Focussing on entrepreneurial competencies, however, risks overlooking entrepreneurial intent, which is likely to play a role in individual responses to country-level initiatives.

There have been several shifts and rapid changes in the educational environment in Uzbekistan over the past two decades, especially in entrepreneurship. Fundamental structural adjustments within the labour market have taken place, including an increase in specialisation

and an increase in competitiveness in the market of educational services (Velychko *et al*, 2018). In addition, special level of knowledge and skills of graduates have increasingly been considered (Velychko *et al*, 2018). Post-soviet states are attempting to mirror entrepreneurship structures and policies of western developed concepts (Dileo *et al*, 2016) and several, including Uzbekistan, are attempting to transition their approach and institutions to model that of established, successful countries and institutions EE structure and programs in their own higher education establishments and systems (Randma and Vanesaar, 2016). Characteristics of this stage of development include some notable areas of progressive development, several key challenges and an on-going need for the development of consistent standards that might offer country-level frameworks for future developments.

### **Progressive Developments in the Region**

The Balkan post-soviet states, those in central Europe and some of other post-soviet countries have made significant transitional changes to EE programs within higher learning institutions (Pigozne *et al*, 2019; Velychko *et al*, 2018 and Putta *et al*, 2014), and the literature here offers insight here into the way this can be approached in Uzbekistan. Notably, many of the more successful changes have developed from a partnership approach, applied in a variety of ways. For example, Moldova partnered with the Liechtenstein Development Service and implemented a reformulation strategy and the introduction of the modified course in tertiary education which consisted of life skills and job search training, entrepreneurship training for vocational school students and unemployed adults, start-up grants for those graduates of entrepreneurship courses who develop viable business plans and training of vocational school staff areas to ensure program sustainability (Saas *et al*, 2015). Similarly, a few universities in Belarus have included business incubators and adapted their higher education institutions to the entrepreneurial environment under the conditions of innovative activity to be carried out through the formation of market-oriented structural divisions to meet international standards (Goloychanska, 2017). The entrepreneurship training programs are effective in shaping the future of enterprises and in turn building entrepreneurs with management skills (Putta, 2014). Positive developments have also been noted in the Ukraine, where Kantsedal *et al* (2019) identified the Poltava Academy using interactive learning technologies ,interactive dialogue, human-computer, business play, situational analysis, assists in attracting students to scientific work, confirms raising the level of their scientific literacy, and also assists in generating a positive image and raising rating indices of higher educational to stimulate scientific activity of students during their studying at present, it is necessary to change from informational forms and methods of training to active ones, combining theoretical knowledge of students and their practical needs.

Latvia and the Baltic states have a variance of positive programs throughout the countries (Dobele, 2016). For example, an innovative concept of social economy promoted in EU countries is realized in Latvian Christian academy. The research identified, programme links principles and methods of social work and social entrepreneurship in interdisciplinary package with the aim of reaching social goals in entrepreneurship. Pigozne *et al* (2019) studied the Latvian framework of the formal educational system found, adult education extends over general education (basic and secondary), vocational education and training, post-secondary education, and higher education. Also revealed in the study was a wide range of non-formal adult education opportunities, provided by the state, local government, and private education institutions Pigozne *et al*, 2019. The research further identified other positive work conducted within the Latvian higher EE institution, including social pedagogical, the organisation of the study process, the modernisation of educational resources via financial support and the evaluation of education quality, which enables balancing the proportion of theory and practice in the study process (Pigozne *et al*, 2019). Pedagogic culture probably plays a major role here. Research in Latvian and Estonian universities identified that staff acknowledged the importance of listening, sharing ideas, inspiring each other, having positive group spirit, achieving mutual goals. openness, tolerance was critical to student's development in comparison to traditional academic lecturing, which has been found to not activate students' entrepreneurship was avoided (Lans *et al*, 2013). Additionally, an interactive pedagogy was preferred (Alas *et al*, 2018), with the inclusion of active business-people, creative workshops, case studies, company visits and group projects. Such an approach can be expected to enhance deep learning (Lans *et al*, 2013). Several universities in Estonia, university lecturers are also employing reflective practices in the entrepreneurial teaching to enhance learning (Toding and Vanesaar, 2018). Raagmaa and Keerberg (2017) praised Estonia as a leading example in higher education institutions. In Estonia, Tight integration with regional power structures provides access to decision-making and institutional resources, which the representatives of national, regional, and local-level organizations joined forces and set up a new institutional form to improve regional development (Raagma and Keeberg, 2017).

EE programs conducted at Tashkent university in Uzbekistan have proved to be very useful for the existing entrepreneurs to develop their management skills (Putta, 2014), but are primarily delivered within the context of business management programmes and an urban environment, in contrast to the work here which has a hospitality and tourism focus and is developed within the much smaller population centre of Samarkand.

## **Barriers to Change**

Russia and Ukraine are also leaning toward deep reformation of higher education to mimic European and western successful counterparts (Velychko et al, 2018) and research in this area offers some useful guidance for Uzbekistan, summarised here as four broad areas for development.

### *System Barriers*

Despite these transitions there are still several barriers within the system including old structures and resistance from some institutions or lack of expertise (Sass et al, 2015). Strong criticism from Burbyka and Telizhenko (2015) also indicates that the current strategies of state regulation are not sufficiently effective in many spheres of activity. The changes are also patchy; many modern universities in Ukraine (mainly state-owned) remain establishments with a bureaucratic type of business activity which they inherited from the Soviet era and have not yet reformed (Burbyka and Telizencheko, 2015). Under the conditions of international globalization, this slows the progressive development of local science education and weakens the competitiveness of most Ukrainian universities at the European market (Velychko *et al*, 2018), but variations in progress are perhaps to be expected given the scale of change currently underway.

### *Cultural Resistance*

Cultural resistance to change is an ongoing going issue in Ukraine (Solesvik *et al*, 2014). Cultural resistance to the accumulation of wealth and material possessions is also organically tied into the socialist view of society in Russia (Minina, 2018; Zhukova et al, 2019). Furthermore, the concept of fairness and egalitarianism in Russia is premised on the principles of communalism, compassion, moderation, and self-restraint (Minina, 2018). This same issue also exists within several higher education structures in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic due to a complex mix of heritage, pluralism, cultural values, and government policy (Lasch (2015).

### *Quality Standards*

Jussibaliyeva *et al*, (2019) appreciated that EE in Kazakhstan is relatively well developed but highlighted that the methods implemented for assessing the quality of programs are not fully developed. There is little compliance with international standards and quality assurance systems (Abdramanova *et al*,2019), although degrees awarded in Uzbekistan do feature in

the International qualification systems used by UK universities (UK Naric; now ECCTIS post-Brexit).

### *Staff Development*

In Ukraine, some universities lack technological development requiring Ukrainian government budgeting policy change in educational sphere as soon as possible to prevent a further technological and innovative lag (Stavytskyy *et al*, 2019). Similarly, in Russia a few universities lack of innovative methods applied in practice, insufficient technical facilities of administration of universities and teaching staff are other short comings observed by other researchers (Akhmetshin *et al*, 2019). The curriculum is designed to realize the national goals and expects students to be able to process, reason, and conceptualize in concrete and abstract realms in solving problems (Lvov *et al.*, 2019). Training was one of the reoccurring themes that surfaces in post-soviet EE research, training in the basic principles of entrepreneurship is essential to student's knowledge and skills development (Pigozne *et al*, 2019). Effective education programmes are highlighted within current research and represent a significant gap in certain states including Kazakhstan (Abenov *et al*, 2019) and the Ukraine (Kryvorucko 2018).

In EE terms, therefore, we identify six areas that are likely to influence both the development of EE programmes in Uzbekistan and their likely effectiveness. From the literature, we identify that key factors are likely to include system barriers, cultural resistance and the parallel development of staff and quality standards. To these four factors, we add entrepreneurial competencies and intent as key factors in the likely future implementation of the entrepreneurial competencies taught in EE courses. The factors are captured as Figure 1 as the basis for future research:

With the identification of key influencing factors, we set the stage for a programme of future research and offer some thoughts on how such research could be developed.

**Insert Figure 1 about here**

### **Future Research**

Research is proposed in several areas, in the context of the development of EE within Uzbekistan. Entrepreneurial competencies are the foundation of EE programmes and are relatively well-researched in a variety of country-contexts. Whilst entrepreneurial competencies will require contextualisation for Uzbekistan, therefore, we do not propose that competencies per se are a key immediate focus for further research.



Whilst system barriers are an interesting area in the context of the changes currently underway in Uzbekistan, access and could theoretically be explored, we suggest that the pace of change is such that research would likely be outdated before it was completed and is in any case unlikely to happen without major Governmental support. Similarly, perceived cultural resistance to entrepreneurship would be an interesting area to explore, however, initially probably from a qualitative perspective and we note the possibility that individual staff building academic careers in EE in Uzbekistan would be well placed to explore the possibilities for future research here. In-country research is likely to be the most effective option which would allow the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants to support access and the collection of qualitative data.

Three initial areas are proposed for future research, identified within the literature, achievable in the context of partnership working in Uzbekistan and drawing on the rich heritage of the Silk Road. The development, implementation and, crucially, evaluation of quality standards is one area where research should be developed. Early-stage work is already in process to develop quality standards for EE in Uzbekistan and research that evaluates the implementation process, the impact and the refining of quality standards would be both useful and timely. There are, however, a number of different layers of standards to be developed, across schools, colleges and universities and there is scope to explore who teaches EE, the competencies and experience those teachers bring to the classroom and the content being delivered. The development of a set of principles for EE education, on which a series of educational 'levels' are based seems likely to be fruitful, in a process akin to the development of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Whilst this developmental approach seems likely to be fruitful, rigorous evaluation and refinement should be planned during the introduction of an approach very new to education in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is, in the most general sense, moving from a didactic system of education built around 'rules' towards a less didactic system based on 'guidance' and this will take time to develop, embed and evaluate. Assessment will also change and the development of assessment strategies for EE should be an embedded part of this process.

The second key area is entrepreneurial intent. One of the challenges in developing EE programmes for hospitality and tourism students in Uzbekistan is the myriad personal and cultural factors that influence entrepreneurial intent, alongside the variety of theoretical frameworks that could be used to underpin future research. A key factor that emerges from the literature and will determine individual responses to country-level changes in the

philosophical environment for entrepreneurship, however, is entrepreneurial intent. Within the context of Samarkand, the rich heritage of the Silk Road and the trading environment in Uzbekistan lends a historical dimension to the concept of a trading people that pre-dates the Soviet era but the extent to which this entrepreneurial intent has survived to the present day is unclear. Individual intention to participate beyond the classroom will, however, be a key influencer in the medium-to-long term success of educational initiatives and is included here as an adaption to the Theory of Planned Behaviour proposed by Ajzen (1991). In a general sense, the theory of planned behaviour develops from psychology and links beliefs to behaviour. The theory of planned behaviour identified three components – attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control – which shape what individuals intend to do. Behavioural intention, in this context, is assumed to be the most proximal determinant of human social behaviour.

Ajzen (1991) draws upon the theory of planned behaviour to offer key insights, acknowledging that intent is key in economies where there are many competent students are in education but little family or cultural history of entrepreneurship in the traditional sense. The theory of planned behaviour was adapted to conceptualise the series pertinent behaviour patterns by Ajzen (1991) and seeks to improve upon the predictive power of the theory of reasoned action by including perceived behavioural control. It assumes that behavioural intention is a strong determinant of behaviour and represents a useful way to consider entrepreneurial intent across cross cultures and continents (Figure 2).

### **Insert Figure 2 about here**

The theory of planned behaviour is used here as the theoretical basis on which future research should be based and recognises the importance of intent. Where post-Soviet states see EE as a priority, their primary goal is usually to increase entrepreneurial competencies amongst a group of individuals. Whilst competencies are clearly vital, they are unlikely to be used in practice unless entrepreneurial intent is also present. In Uzbekistan, increasing entrepreneurial intentions amongst students is seen as a key next stage in economic development. By adapting the theory of planned behaviour, Ajzen (1991) summarises three key aspects of development, in terms of attitudes towards entrepreneurship, social norms and role models and perceived behavioural control and self-efficiency. Where country-level change is being developed, however, we acknowledge that change is likely to be slow because by focussing on EE in a university setting, we effectively ignore the importance of changing attitudes and social norms amongst the often highly influential families of students. Nevertheless, Ajzen (1991) makes an important contribution in highlighting that entrepreneurial attitudes are only one part of the required change, and that attention to three

key aspects is required to build sustainable change for the future. Changing social norms is a notoriously slow process and realistic expectations around the time taken to develop a new generation of entrepreneurs would be sensible. The process of entrepreneurship has been described as the syncretic production of the future and the same concept might reasonably be applied to the development of economic change via social attitudes and norms.

The third area where further research would be useful develops from current thinking around the factors influencing entrepreneurial intent. In developing current thinking on EE in Uzbekistan the authors acknowledge the importance of culture in changing both educational systems and approaches towards entrepreneurship on a country-level basis. The potential for cultural resistance to influence the success or otherwise of such changes is also acknowledged, both in terms of its importance and in terms of future research. The extent to which the term 'Soviet' should be viewed as a geographic or, conversely, a cultural term is open to debate, as is the extent to which Asian culture or Soviet culture dominates. Blending these observations with the history of the Silk Road as a trade route, the authors postulate that these factors are likely to vary within different geographic areas of Uzbekistan and indeed within and between different population groups. Similarly, the pace of change is also likely to vary between, for example, major cities and remote rural areas. The influence of the Soviet era is likely to be profound but layered as part of the wider cultural and social history of Uzbekistan and the impact of changing and developing cultural norms would merit further research to support the broader aim of recapturing, repurposing and capitalising on the entrepreneurial history of the Silk Road in Uzbekistan.

Hi, I presented what we have been doing on Quality Standards at the CS partnership meeting today.

Jamilya gave some feedback from the Uzbek QSEE working group which I thought you'd find interesting;

Umida, Umida, Oybek and Nozima are the working group in country – They are proposing the following approach to the Ministry;

- Major classification will be a set of quality standards for the delivery of entrepreneurship in Arts Institutes where creative entrepreneurship is a core curricular subject. Oybek's programme that he shared this week could be an exemplar of this.

- The sub- classification will be for Universities where the development of creative thinking to be an entrepreneur is a subject within another discipline ie tourism or business

- Using the QSEE seminars and instruction on quality standards as the basis for a new course introducing teachers/lecturers to teaching entrepreneurship programmes.

They are also exploring the certification opportunities for an entrepreneurship programme that could be awarded within formal education but also non-formal ie as a professional development course for businesses. London Met and their partnership already have a module which could form an exemplar.

Once we capture these outcomes, I think it will demonstrate excellent impact from our engagement!

kate

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