

Feeling the Risks: Effects of Emotional Competences Development through Outdoor Training in the Entrepreneurial Intent of University Students.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been studied extensively over the past decades and previous work has shown that entrepreneurship plays an important role in creating employment, productivity gains and economic growth (Parker 2005). In this context, universities are expected to play also a role with respect to fostering entrepreneurship, particularly among their students. Within the research on entrepreneurship, the individual level consists on the analysis of traits, entrepreneurial attitude and personal profiles, which favours the development of entrepreneurship (Bolton and Lane 2012). Psychological characteristics has been studied in reference to its influence on the individual entrepreneurial intent (i.e. Drost and McGuire 2011; Liñan 2008). Furthermore, previous studies suggest that personality plays a role in becoming an entrepreneur, linking entrepreneurship with emotional competencies such as self and social management skills (Goleman 1998). In this context, Emotional Intelligence is defined as the ability of people to recognize and manage their own' and others' feelings (Goleman 1995, 1998). Some experiential learning (Kolb 1984, 1998) as Outdoor Training (OT) has been proved useful for changing and improving these competences (Hamilton and Cooper 2001). Moreover, this possibility of changing is relevant as there is evidence that emotional intelligence is a need to work effectively, both individually and in groups in organizational settings, being a crucial predictor for workplace success (Cross and Travaglione, 2003). Moreover, people with high emotional intelligence tend to be better able to regulate their emotions, and therefore experience more self-confidence and greater control of environmental demands, making them act in an entrepreneurial mode (Wong and Law 2002). In addition, individuals with high self-perceived emotional intelligence tend to be more effective and display more creative layout, facilitating, consequently, entrepreneurial behaviour (Zampetakis et al. 2009).

Nevertheless, there is no research about how changing emotional competences of individuals with OT techniques might affect their entrepreneurial orientation, particularly for university students. In this paper, an experience of OT was designed, involving university students. Data from prior and post participants' and non-participants' emotional competences and entrepreneurial orientation are analysed. The contribution is a better understanding on how participants in an OT experience, particularly university students, change their emotional competences (influence and organizational awareness) and this affects an important dimension of their individual entrepreneurial orientation such as risk.

This paper continues as follows. After a literature review on entrepreneurial intent, emotional intelligence, OT and the related research on the University context, the method and main results are presented. Discussion and conclusion sections, including limitations and implications for practice, close the paper.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual framework

In order to analyse the effects of changing the emotional competences of university students through OT on their entrepreneurial intent, a conceptual framework is necessary (see Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Entrepreneurial Intention among university students

Entrepreneurial intent can be defined as “a self-acknowledged conviction by a person who intends to set up a new business venture and consciously plan to do so at some point in the future. That point in the future might be imminent or indeterminate, and may never be reached” (Thompson, 2009, p. 676). Besides this individual level, there is the so-called entrepreneurial orientation of the organization (Covin and Slevin 1991), which refers to the strategy that makes organizations provide a basis for entrepreneurial decisions and actions (Lumpkin and Dess 1996, 2001). In the individual level, individuals' personality

variables play an important role in the development of alternative models of the entrepreneurial process (Zhao et al. 2005) and individual perceptions (especially, self-efficacy and role model) have been found as the most important antecedents of entrepreneurial intention (Liñán et al. 2011a). This paper is focused on this individual level, in the context of university students.

After conducting a literature review, a number of significant studies about the individual entrepreneurial intention of university students were identified and analysed (see Table 1).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

In general, these studies can be divided into two broad categories: context and personal characteristics. About *context*, it has been studied entrepreneurship education, regional differences, culture, founding conditions, social capital and university support (i.e. Coduras et al. 2008, Lee et al. 2011, Liñán et al. 2010, Liñán et al. 2011b).

Regarding *personal characteristics*, there have been studied the instrument development, psychological characteristics, self-efficacy, desirability, feasibility, gender. The *development of an instrument* to measure entrepreneurial orientation has been a prolific area. Liñán and Santos (2007) analysed the specific influence of the new socioeconomic factor of social capital on the formation of entrepreneurial intentions, developing an Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ) instrument. They found an indirect influence of the constructs defining cognitive social capital (bonding social capital and bridging social capital) on the entrepreneurial intention. Subsequently, Liñán and Chen (2009) test the EIQ psychometric properties', in Spain and Taiwan, finding its properties satisfactory. Furthermore, they showed how cultural values modified the way individuals in each society perceive entrepreneurship. Later on, Thompson (2009) clarified the construct of individual entrepreneurial intent and reported the development and validation of a reliable and internationally applicable different individual entrepreneurial intent scale. Finally, Bolton and Lane (2012) developed a measurement instrument for individual entrepreneurial orientation, finding three distinct factors that demonstrated reliability

and validity: innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness, which statistically correlated with measures of entrepreneurial intention. As it will be explained later, this instrument was used in this research.

About the *psychological characteristics*, there are also a number of investigations in the literature. It has been found that perceptions of contextual founding conditions have an impact on the intention to found one's own business (Lüthje and Franke 2003), how some psychological characteristics affect the inclination towards entrepreneurship (Yusof et al. 2007) and how social values regarding entrepreneurship and personal skill perceptions affect entrepreneurial intentions (Liñan 2008). Furthermore, it has been examined possible antecedents (entrepreneurship education and experience, proactive personality and entrepreneurial self-efficacy) of students' intent to engage in entrepreneurship (Drost and McGuire 2011) and how proactive personality has a robust relationship with the three different manifestations of entrepreneurial intent (general, high growth, and lifestyle), mediated by entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Prabhu et al. 2012). These studies partially relates to some competences of emotional intelligence, as it will be shown later.

Regarding *self-efficacy*, it has been examined in the context of the relationship between psychological characteristics and entrepreneurial inclination among university students (Yusof et al. 2007). Furthermore, individuals with different cognitive styles do not see themselves as possessing equal self-efficacy in all the tasks required for new venture creation (Kickul et al. 2009). Additionally, it has been shown how self-efficacy related to creating a venture was positively related to entrepreneurial intent (Shook and Bratianu 2010). Moreover, entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education, educational experience and proactive personality and the tree types of entrepreneurial intent (Drost and McGuire 2011). Finally, it has been studied the mechanism (mediation/moderation) by which entrepreneurial self-efficacy affects the relationship between proactive personality and entrepreneurial intent (Prabhu et al. 2012). These studies are related to the emotional competence of self-confidence.

About *desirability* and *feasibility*, it is clear that students arrive at universities with entrepreneurial needs and aspirations (Collins et al. 2004) and with a positive image towards entrepreneurship (Veciana et al. 2005), although the perception of feasibility is not positive (Guerrero et al. 2008; Veciana et al. 2005). Moreover, it has been found how desirability associated with creating a venture was positively related to entrepreneurial intent (Shook and Bratianu 2010). Finally, there is an association between the perceived convenience, risk tolerance and perceived viability with entrepreneurial intention (Valencia et al. 2012). These studies about partially reflect the individual entrepreneurial intent (Bolton and Lane 2012).

Related to *gender*, significant differences in entrepreneurial intent regarding age, gender and field of study have been found (Schwarz et al. 2009). Gender plays a significant role in how the figure of the entrepreneur is perceived and on the intention to generate new business, with women having a lower level of intention (Sánchez-Escobedo et al. 2011). Furthermore, there have been found are significant gender differences in barrier perceptions, gap that is not consistent across cultures and a moderating effect of gender on the relationship between barriers and entrepreneurial intentions has been identified (Shinnar et al. 2012).

To conclude, it can be said that these studies have analysed concepts related to emotional competences but not these as such. Moreover, no research has been published, to the best knowledge of authors, relating emotional competences development and OT, with the individual entrepreneurial orientation of university students.

Emotional competences

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability of people to recognize and manage their own' and others' feelings (Goleman 1995, 1998) and emotional competencies are identified with the ability to feel, understand and effectively apply the power of emotions as a source of energy, information, confidence, creativity and ability to influence others (Goleman 1998). It is believed that emotional intelligence

determines the potential for a person to learn the personal and social skills, whereas emotional competence shows how much of that potential has been translated into the workplace (Cherniss and Goleman 2001). Therefore, emotional competence is a characteristic underlying the individual, which is related causally to a standard of effectiveness and superior performance in a job or situation (Spencer and Spencer 1993). These emotional competencies are reflected in personal skills (how individuals handle themselves) and social skills (how individuals handle others) (Kierstead 1999). People who develop emotional competencies adequately tend to feel more satisfied, more efficient and better able to master mental habits that condition their productivity. In contrast, those individuals who fail to control their emotional lives, struggle in constant infighting, which weakens their ability to work and prevents them from thinking clearly (Goleman 1998).

Despite the interest that has existed for decades for emotional intelligence in organizations, some open questions still exist about the concept, theory and how to measure it (Landy and Conte 2004). Among the most commonly used models to measure emotional intelligence and competences, it can be highlighted the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) of Boyatzis (1994). This is a tool for 360-degree assessment, which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of individuals in terms of competencies. Five dimensions of emotional intelligence comprising twenty competences have been proposed (Boyatzis et al. 1999). They overlap with dimensions of personality (self-awareness, emotional stability, extraversion and openness) and other psychological concepts, such as motivation and leadership (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004). This study uses a University student's edition of the ECI (ECI-U) (Goleman and Boyatzis 2001).

Emotional Competences and Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation

There have been some papers suggesting the importance of examining differences in entrepreneurial behaviour (Covin and Slevin 1991; Zahra 1993). However, little attention has been paid to the emotional

competences and its relation with the individual entrepreneurial orientation. Previous studies suggest that personality plays a role in the origins of entrepreneurship and this has been demonstrated related to the emotional intelligence, linking entrepreneurship with emotional competencies such as self-direction and social management skills (Goleman 1998). People with high emotional intelligence tend to be better able to regulate their emotions, and therefore experience more self-confidence and greater control of environmental demands, making them act in an entrepreneurial mode (Wong and Law 2002). Thus, it has been found a significantly high level of overall emotional intelligence of the studied entrepreneurs (Cross and Travaglione 2003) and how those individuals who tend to reject destructive feelings, have a high self-confidence and are able to recognize their own feelings, to promote and take risks, are those with a more entrepreneurial spirit (Hadizadeh et al. 2009). In addition, individuals with high self-perceived emotional intelligence tend to be more effective and display more creative layout, facilitating entrepreneurial behaviour (Zampetakis et al. 2009). Consequently, there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and individual entrepreneurial orientation, being emotional intelligence an important factor in the prediction of entrepreneurship (Rhee and While 2007; Prahdan and Nath 2012).

As a method to change and develop competences, especially leadership, teamwork and group cooperation (Hattie et al. 1997; Wagner et al. 1991), OT has been proposed (Wagner and Campbell 1994). OT (known also as outdoor management development, learning outside the classroom, outdoor learning, learning experience or classroom without walls) is based on the Kolb's experiential learning theories (Kolb 1984) and it helps participants to perform a self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and from there, learn about themselves (Bennett 1996). Consequently, people learn best when they have a direct exchange with their own experiences, that is, learning by "doing". In sum, OT confronts participants with a series of challenges and different situations where they have to solve problems, allowing them the space and resources needed to generate immediate success/error in their actions. One additional peculiarity of this methodology is the speed with which the skills, attitudes and values are put into practice, resulting in

greater clarity of participant goals (Jiménez and Gómez 2008). Besides, the fear of failure that exists in real situations does not exist in OT, as the methodology itself provides participants the opportunity to make mistakes in a supportive environment, causing learning to be much more effective. Furthermore, OT favours the emergence of underlying conflicts in teams, creating opportunities to identify blockages and helping to solve them. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this methodology is to create a space between individuals, groups and organizations, to know more, to be more aware of the elements of improvement, and to begin developing an action plan that is consistent, coherent and focused on a clear objective, which has been agreed from the start. In short, the OT program has elements of uncertainty, reality, arousal, perception of risk and interaction with nature (Ewert 1989; Priest 1990; Raiola and O'Keefe 1999). By taking a number of risks, the participants in OT experiences extend their limits, achieving targets they never thought to be able to reach (McEvoy and Cragun 1997). Finally, outdoor development enables learning to take place in three levels, physical, intellectual, and emotional (Petrini 1990; Burnett and James 1994) and it has been proved that OT programmes can be used to improve soft skills as teamwork, problem solving, risk-taking, self-esteem and interpersonal communication (Hamilton and Cooper 2001). In this work, OT will be used as method to analyse if emotional competences can be developed in university students to improve their entrepreneurial orientation.

Based on this past research, the research questions of this paper are twofold. Firstly, *does the development of university students' emotional competences, using OT as method, lead to an improvement in their entrepreneurial orientation?* Secondly, *what are the emotional competences and dimension of the entrepreneurial orientation that change?*

3. Methods

In order to explore the proposed research questions, quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. Quantitative method consisted in evaluating the emotional competences and the individual entrepreneurial

orientation of university students, before and after taking part in a program of OT. For this purpose, the ECI-U questionnaire developed by Goleman and Boyatzis (2001) was used. This tool allows the determination of strengths and weaknesses of individuals, providing information on the skills needed to improve and achieve their goals. It considers emotional competences organized into four clusters (see Table 2).

The OT program structure was designed with a quasi-experimental intragroup/intergroup, with pre-test/post-test/re-test with control group (Goleman, 1998; Cherniss and Goleman, 2001). This design allows controlling and evaluating the results of a possible effect of treatment or intervention program, using a control group with which to make comparisons and check learning retention. The program began with a presentation to the participants about the objectives. It was explained that OT offers a range of activities that attempt to simulate reality in a very different context from the day by day, seeking surprise, novelty and motivation. Furthermore, the self-assessment pre-test (ECI-U) was explained to participants, as well as confidentiality and safety of the planned activities. Finally, the positive role of facilitators, developing a positive ambience during the program, as well as controlling the emotional climate during the training process, was ensured (Cherniss and Goleman 2001).

When the OT activities finished, participants were asked to complete the ECI-U questionnaire, to measure the potential increase in their levels of EI (post-test). Additionally, an in-group analysis of the different experiences as well as the problem solving, attitudes and decisions were performed. This analysis was a crucial point in the program, as participants began to become aware of how they had performed for the challenges and had made parallels with attitudes in everyday life. Subsequently, and in order to reassess the EI sample, participants were asked again to complete the ECI-U questionnaire, three months after the OT program finalised (post-test). In addition, they took the opportunity to develop a concrete action plan aimed at all those competences, which were susceptible of improvement. In parallel, the individual entrepreneurial orientation questionnaire developed by Bolton and Lane (2012) was completed by

participants in the OT program. This scale contains eleven items divided into three dimensions: risk, innovation and proactiveness.

Regarding the qualitative analysis, individual semi-structured interviews were performed (Silverman 2000; Yin 2011). The objective was to get more in-depth information from participants about their perception on emotional competences' changes. The interviews lasted about an hour. They were conducted by a team of two interviewers different from facilitators, to ensure confidentiality. In these interviews, participants were asked about the usefulness of OT as a tool to improve their entrepreneurial intent.

Finally, to ensure that substantial external variations do not affect the emotional competences of participants, load of work and leadership, teamwork and experiences of voluntary work during the training program was controlled. Finally, credits were granted to participants and confidentiality of questionnaires was guaranteed.

4. Results

Sample

OT experience was conducted with final-year students of Business Administration in a Spanish public university, involving 153 students (74 students who participated directly in the experience and 80 who did not participate, but served as a control group). The students completed a questionnaire that included questions on perceived emotional skills and personal entrepreneurial orientation. Secondly, personal interviews based on a semi-structured questionnaire, were conducted to 74 students to go deeper on the opinions they had about the experience of OT in their individual entrepreneurial orientation.

Participants in the experiment of OT were mostly female students (68.62%), 23 years on average and studying the fourth year of Business Administration. On average, studies of the mother and father were mid-level studies.

As mentioned, load of work was examined during the two months scheduled for the experiment. No significant differences were found between the experimental groups and the control one, so the possibility of creating different opportunities in the construction of the EI was discarded (Taylor, 1988). Furthermore, participants were asked about the leadership, the teamwork and the experiences of voluntary work that they had had during the period of accomplishment of the OT programs, as it could also provide opportunities to learn competences of EI (Kolb 1998; Taylor 1988). It was verified that 100% of the participants did not have previous experience with the OT program, whereas 20% had any experience of previous leadership and 90% had some previous experience on teamwork. Likewise, 92% had received in class some training on personal and interpersonal skills, and 15% had some previous experience in voluntary work. Consequently, the answers showed that significant differences between the participants did not exist on any of these dimensions.

Quantitative Analysis

The mean values of all analysed emotional competencies of participants were higher in the post-test and the re-test compared to the pre-test. This shows that all participants increased their competences after completing the program. Moreover, higher competition level reached after the experience of OT were valuing themselves, with an average in the re-test of 4.442, and the least, influence, with an average of 3.940. In contrast, the control group showed no significant increase in any of the skills tested.

The normality of the different variables, separating the participants and the control group samples, was analysed, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Hair et al 1998). Results showed the non-normality of data for both groups, consequently, it was necessary to apply non-parametric procedures based on ranks, to observe the central tendency, as the Wilcoxon test (see Table 2). For the participants, significant differences in means in the pre-test, post-test, and pre-test were found. For the control group, no

significant differences in the same test were found. The results obtained thus ensure that the OT program significantly increased the level of emotional competencies of participants.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Meanwhile, Table 3 shows the main descriptive statistics of the results obtained after applying the individual entrepreneurial scale of Bolton and Lane (2012). Results indicate that the average values for participants in the program OT always reach levels greater than in the control group, except for the variable I3. As none of the variables was normally distributed, to check the statistical significance of mean differences obtained, Kolmogorov-Smirnov non-parametric test for independent samples was applied (see Table 4) (Hair et al 1998). For four of the variables (M, R1, R2 and R3) mean differences were statistically significant, with p-value <0.05. For all the other variables (I1, I2, I3, I4, P1, P2 and P3), the obtained mean differences were not enough to say that the participants differ from the levels in the control group (p-value > 0.05).

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

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Analysing these results, the OT program is proven to have changed the participants' emotional intelligence and have changed some entrepreneurial orientation dimensions too, especially those related to risk-taking (variables R1, R2 and R3). For having more details on this, Spearman correlations coefficients were calculated, between EI and the mean values of R1, R2 and R3 (RISK) (see Table 5). Results showed a positive relation between EI and RISK. Furthermore, eight variables showed a significant correlation: self-control, reliability, adaptability, organizational awareness, leadership, influence, connection to others, and teamwork and collaboration.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Furthermore, for a complete analysis and confirmatory results on emotional intelligence variables that explain RISK dimension of entrepreneurship, a regression using the step-by-step procedure was estimated (see Table 6) (Hair et al 1998). This procedure indicated that two variables (influence and organizational awareness) had the highest effect to explain entrepreneurial orientation. Both variables showed statistical significance (Sign. <0.05) and together explain 12.80 per cent of the changes in the entrepreneurial orientation of the sample. Therefore, it can be understood that those who had a high level of influence, that is, who use strategies to enlist the support of others, also had a high entrepreneurial orientation. Similarly, people with high level of organizational awareness, which means understanding key power relationships within groups or organizations, showed his/her bigger willingness to become entrepreneurs. This relationship was also supported by the correlation coefficient of the mentioned variables (0.290 and 0.338, respectively).

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

Qualitative Analysis

In order to go deeper in the how and why changing the EI the individual entrepreneurial orientation could change, several interviews were conducted (Silverman 2000; Yin 2011). After analysing the transcripts, it can be said that the participants expressed different ideas about program outcomes, but most of them shared that they obtained an improvement in their emotional competencies and this served to encourage their entrepreneurial intention. Moreover, in the analysis of transcripts, four main areas were found as relevant: the OT experience itself, the usefulness of the OT as a tool for the development of emotional competence, the capacity of OT to help start-ups and the benefits of OT to encourage entrepreneurship (see Table 7).

In reference to the *OT experience*, participants mentioned the usefulness of OT as a methodology, experience activity and as a something innovative. One participant described his idea as follows: “It helps

me to know how to face the inconveniences of daily life differently, weighing and reasoning, without panic.” In the same vein, another participant emphasized his view about how the experience helped him to cope better with real situations because “you do something different than what you have been doing since you begin to study and see things from another point of view.”

Regarding the *usefulness of OT*, participants pointed to a high consensus since 38 respondents highlighted that the program helped them to get to know themselves. Twenty-one of them mentioned its usefulness for teamwork, for example, one participant said “I realized that I would need the help of many people, and that although we believe that we can do things alone, cooperation with others can encourage them to come out better.” Another interviewee, almost in the same sense as above noted that: “This experience taught me to 'negotiate' with my colleagues, to realize that all ideas can come together, the result is very different and we can focus.” Interesting responses were also obtained on teamwork, for example, one participant said “I have found teamwork and motivation as critical to achieve the goals.”

Moreover, with respect to the *benefits of OT in promoting entrepreneurship in general*, the answers of the respondents showed little variability. More than half of the responses were in favour of using the OT program as a useful method to get to know their personal ability to become entrepreneurs. For example, one participant indicated their positive perception by saying: “My experience participating in the OT program has contributed to change my idea of creating a company and know that the entrepreneur who succeeds there not been lucky but has worked his luck.” Similarly, other participants expressed that: “Although I have always had the idea of creating my own company, it has encouraged me to take more out in the future” and “it has encouraged me to have new ideas, new things, and that although is challenging, when we face difficulties with good organization and good work we can reach our objectives”.

Finally, regarding the *benefits of OT in promoting individual entrepreneurial orientation*, there were found a high consensus on the answers of the respondents, as 34 of them agreed to state that helped better

understand the strengths and weaknesses, 17 demonstrated on motivation and 14 did so with respect to capacity . In addition, OT was considered as a very rewarding experience and recommended to future entrepreneurs as it can help them to take the right path. For example, one participant described his idea as follows: “It helps to have more desire to do something unique and exclusive.” Another participant expressed by saying that “the situation created forces you to take action to overcome the problem.”

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Relevant data were obtained on what emotional competencies are enhanced with the participation in OT experiences and how this affects the individual entrepreneurial orientation. This helps to draw conclusions relevant to the development of the attitude and entrepreneurship at university at the individual level by improving emotional skills of students. Positive thinking to start a business is higher among students who participated in the OT. In addition, these participants are more likely to take strong action, venturing into the unknown. They have a higher propensity to invest a lot of time and/or money on something that could produce high returns. Moreover, they are more likely to engage in situations of risk, they use a wider range of new approaches to solve new problems instead of using previously proven approaches and they are more innovative in looking for original approaches to problem solving, rather than using methods used by others. This is consistent with Rhee and While (2007) who found, on a sample of young entrepreneurs from USA, that most enterprising participants showed higher levels in the following skills: self-confidence, honesty, achievement orientation, service orientation, empathy, a catalyst for change, and teamwork compared with other capabilities in the survey.

Many studies conclude that individual entrepreneurial operation depends on his/her personality. Thus, EI can play a major role in the efficient development of an entrepreneurial orientation. Since EI influences the entrepreneurial orientation, it can be assumed that EI may enhance entrepreneurship. In this paper it is

shown with quantitative and qualitative data that OT has benefits for the promotion of entrepreneurship, to be used as a training methodology. For example, it has been stated that “I had no thought of starting a business idea and now I have that idea in my mind” and that OT “helps me to know how to face the difficulties of daily life in another way, weighing and reasoning, without panic”.

To conclude, related to the research questions, firstly, the development of university students’ emotional competences, using OT as method, does lead to an improvement in their entrepreneurial orientation. Secondly, the emotional competences and dimension of the entrepreneurial orientation that change are related to social awareness and relationship management clusters of emotional competences, particularly organizational awareness and influence. These emotional competences are related to risk, as one of the dimensions of the individual entrepreneurial orientation scale. After participating in OT activities, individuals improve their risk-taking perceptions, thus favouring their entrepreneurial orientation.

As general benefits of OT for the promotion of entrepreneurship among university students, OT involves a greater awareness of individuals about themselves, their limitations and improving their motivation, communication skills, coordination and empathy. After participating in OT, university students are more entrepreneurial oriented, at least from the risk taking side.

Implications

Despite its exploratory nature, this research is important for understanding how the entrepreneurial orientation of university students can be changed through OT activities that change their emotional competences. Other implications are, first, that the findings may be of interest to entrepreneurs who wish to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and achieve further growth in their businesses. They could attend OT experiences to improve those skills. Secondly, educators facing the development of future entrepreneurs, and who wish to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit of their students, could positively affect

that spirit through OT experiences. In recent years, the number of entrepreneurship education programs has raised sharply (Kuratko and Hodgetts 2001). However, there are still few empirical findings to aid in the pedagogical design of such educational programs (Honig 2004), so OT could help in this context.

Limitations

Like all research, this exploratory study has some limitations. In principle, as an exploratory study, it tries to improve the understanding of an under researched area such as the role of OT in changing emotional competences and the entrepreneurial orientation of university students. Other limitations are, firstly, that this is a cross-sectional study in an academic year. It would require data from several years of longitudinal character to really know if college students with more personal entrepreneurial orientation actually made them go into business. Secondly, it is a study in a single university. To increase the generalizability of results data from other universities should be included. Thirdly, research on differences in self-assessments of male and female entrepreneurs may be important, given the preliminary findings of this study. Therefore, these OT programs could help women to improve their ability to manage the entrepreneurial process and may enhance the effectiveness of female entrepreneurship. More research in this area would bring more information to build and enrich the knowledge in the field of entrepreneurial orientation of university students.

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