



***Academic Entrepreneurship
in the Humanities and Social Sciences:
Research Conducted among Students
of Wrocław University***

SUMMARY

The article explores the notion of entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors in the sphere of academic entrepreneurship that had not been hitherto thoroughly researched. The goal of the article is to analyse the academic entrepreneurship in the humanities and social sciences. The research conducted among students of Wrocław University was based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (I. Ajzen, 1991) and the Model of Entrepreneurial Event (A. Shapero, I. Sokol, 1982). For research purposes, the authors conducted questionnaires consisting of three parts. Part one comprised questions regarding entrepreneurial attitudes. Part two concerned future professional plans of students, including motivation to start a company. In part three, the respondents evaluated innovation and entrepreneurship centers. The results of the research support the conclusions that entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors are already being formed at the stage of education. The findings show that there is a need to form strategic educational programs that would provide proper incentives supporting students in developing their entrepreneurial abilities. In particular, this should include the humanities and social sciences.

→ **KEYWORDS:** ACADEMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EDUCATION, HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

STRESZCZENIE

Przedsiębiorczość akademicka w naukach humanistycznych i społecznych na przykładzie badań przeprowadzonych wśród studentów Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego

W artykule zostało przedstawione zagadnienie przedsiębiorczych postaw i zachowań w obszarze przedsiębiorczości akademickiej, który dotychczas nie został szeroko zbadany. Celem artykułu jest analiza stanu przedsiębiorczości akademickiej w naukach humanistycznych

i społecznych. Badania zostały przeprowadzone na podstawie Teorii Planowanego Zachowania (I. Ajzen, 1991) oraz Modelu Zdarzenia Przedsiębiorczego (A. Shapero, I. Sokol, 1982). Do przeprowadzenia badań zastosowano ankietę składającą się z trzech części. Część pierwsza dotyczyła postaw przedsiębiorczych studentów, druga objęła zagadnienia dotyczące planów zawodowych, w tym motywacji do podjęcia własnej działalności gospodarczej, w części trzeciej respondenci dokonali oceny ośrodków innowacji i przedsiębiorczości. Rezultaty badań wskazały, iż postawy i zachowania przedsiębiorcze kształtują się już na etapie edukacji. Istnieje zatem potrzeba tworzenia strategicznych programów edukacyjnych zapewniających odpowiednie narzędzia wspierające studentów w rozwoju ich przedsiębiorczych umiejętności, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem studentów nauk humanistycznych i społecznych.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** – PRZEDSIĘBIORCZOŚĆ AKADEMICKA, EDUKACJA, NAUKI HUMANISTYCZNE I SPOŁECZNE

Introduction

The newest trends in the development of higher education underline the meaning of academic entrepreneurship not only in the field of empirical sciences, but also in the humanities and social sciences. These trends, to a certain extent, result from understanding how innovations affect societies. This social dimension of innovations has hitherto been disregarded. Meanwhile, there are other mechanisms apart from high-tech innovative products that are critical for the growth of a knowledge-based-economy. These include: social trust, will to cooperate, social creativity, and an interdisciplinary approach. In this context, universities and educational programs play a crucial role in the formation of entrepreneurial attitudes and innovative social solutions.

Methodology and Sample

The research was conducted with the use of research tools, questionnaires, consisting of three parts, 31 questions in total. The content of the questionnaire and context of the research was based on two theories relating to the identification of entrepreneurial attitudes, that is: Theory of Planned Behavior (I. Ajzen, 1991), and the Model of Entrepreneurial Event (A. Shapero, I. Sokol, 1982).

The Theory of Planned Behavior,¹ to a great extent belongs to a psychological research field. It assumes that human behavior is the outcome of intentions that are determined by three factors associated with perception:

- perception of the attractiveness of the object or activity (attitude) that are presented towards these objects or activities,
- perception of the social norms, i.e. whether society accepts/rejects a given belief or behavior,
- perception of control over behavior, that is predicting the possibilities and constraints of a given behavior.

The Model of Entrepreneurial Event² assumes that it is the intention that precludes entrepreneurial behavior. If there is a suitable opportunity, this kind of behavior will occur. It depends first of all on the individual's perception of her/his own willingness (*perceived desirability*) and feasibility of her/his intentions (*perceived feasibility*). Both these depend on external factors. The third indicator of human intentions is the propensity to act. Events play an exceptional role in the process of activating entrepreneurship. Events are specific incentives that invigorate economic activity. The event might be graduation, an institutional incentives or a market offer, but also a job loss.

Based on the above theoretical assumptions, which the authors applied to the research, *entrepreneurship* has been defined and analyzed in the meaning of a process (starting and running a company) or in the meaning of an attitude that a given individual represents. An entrepreneurial person is creative, independent, persistent and consistent when achieving the set goals. This kind of personality has high self-esteem and shows a readiness to be responsible not only for her/himself, but also for others. Such a person is not afraid to take decisions (very often risky one), can co-act in a group and recognize chances while others do not. An entrepreneurial and creative person can, but does not have to be innovative. Entrepreneurship is one of

¹ Cf. I. Ajzen, *The Theory of Planned Behavior*, "Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes" 1991, t. 50.

² Cf. A. Shapero, L. Sokol, *Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship*, in: C. Kent, D. Sexton, K. Vespers, *The Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, New York 1982.

the key competences listed by the European Commission in the context of a life-long learning process.³

The authors define *academic entrepreneurship* in a broad sense, which is described, inter alia, in Polish discourse⁴ and literature.⁵ Accordingly to the proposed definition, the dimensions of the university's functions nowadays are not only strict cooperation with the external environment, or technology transfer, but also: entrepreneurial education (understood as "enhancement of the professional adaptation of the graduates to the dynamic external conditions,"⁶ and also as adjustment of educational programs to the requirements of the labor market) and entrepreneurship of students and graduates, shaped by graduates starting their own firms, which are based on the knowledge acquired during their studies.

The aforementioned methodological assumptions were incorporated into the structure of the questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire (13 questions) dealt with the entrepreneurial attitudes of students, especially: the assessment of own entrepreneurship, education and activity during studies, the motivation to start an own company.

The second part (8 questions) included issues concerning planned activity after graduation, including motivation to start one's own company.

In the third part (10 questions), the authors asked the students how they evaluate innovation and entrepreneurship centers, especially academic entrepreneurship incubators.

The questionnaires were aimed at students of the following Faculties at the University of Wrocław (chronologically): Social Sciences Faculty, majors: International Relations (IR) (3rd year of bachelor's degree) and International Security (IS) (1st year of

³ Cf. *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, European Reference Framework*, Education and Culture DG, European Communities, Belgium 2007.

⁴ To compare: narrow definition of academic entrepreneurship, i.e. defined as university spin-offs and spin-outs, one might find in Anglo-Saxon discourse.

⁵ Cf. J. Cieślak, *Kształcenie w zakresie przedsiębiorczości na poziomie akademickim*, in: *Kształtowanie postaw przedsiębiorczych a edukacja ekonomiczna*, eds. P. Wachowiak, M. Dąbrowski, B. Majewski, Warszawa 2007, pp. 71-80; K. Wach, *Edukacja na rzecz przedsiębiorczości wobec współczesnych wyzwań cywilizacyjno-gospodarczych*, "Przedsiębiorczość – Edukacja" 2013, 9, pp. 246-257.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 182.

master's degree); Physics and Astronomy Faculty, major: Technical Physics (TP) (3rd year of bachelor's degree); Law, Administration and Economics Faculty, major: Economics (1st year of master's degree). In total 146 questionnaires were received, from the students of majors: International Relations (39 questionnaires), International Security (32 questionnaires), Technical Physics (12 questionnaires), Economics (63 questionnaires).

Conducting research in three Faculties, within a group of 146 students guaranteed the representativeness of the sample in a quantitative and qualitative manner (diversity). It also allows the identification of a broad spectrum of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of students and university's actions. The universities now see their new roles as a challenge in both a didactic and scientific dimension, as in the context of management and solutions fostering the commercialization of knowledge.

The answers of each group of students were analyzed separately, which helped to observe differences and similarities in the students' attitudes in each Faculty.⁷

The authors applied purposive sampling, as they aimed to research different scientific fields, as well the humanities and social sciences (International Relations, International Security, Economics), as empirical sciences (Technical Physics).

Results of the Research – Preliminary Remarks

Among students of International Relations most of the respondents were women (28) and 11 were men). The second group in the Faculty of Social Sciences were students of International Security, 17 women and 15 men. The third group was comprised of 63 students of Economics (46 women and 17 men). The last researched group were students of Technical Physics, 12 respondents (7 men and 5 women). Almost all of the respondents were between 18-25.

The authors also included a sample of students from empirical studies as they aimed to tentatively compare the entrepreneurial

⁷ For more about Entrepreneurial attitudes among different faculties see: J. Białek, A. Kurczewska, *Ocena zależności między postrzeganiem edukacji w zakresie przedsiębiorczości a intencjami przedsiębiorczymi studentów*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Oeconomica" 2013, vol. 280, pp. 49-59.

culture in the humanities and social sciences with the empirical sciences.

Part I. Identification of entrepreneurial attitudes – education and motives to conduct one’s own company

In this part, the activity during studies was a meaningful issue. The list included: domestic and foreign scholarships, activity in scientific groups, internships in private companies, trainings, voluntary service and running one’s own company.

Among IR students most of them took part in different trainings (22 indications), which might indicate a significant pragmatism among students, in the context of future employment: the students do not only want to gain knowledge while studying, but they also want to broaden their competences outside the university. When it comes to domestic and foreign scholarships, it is striking that there were only 5 indications for foreign scholarships and none for domestic scientific exchange.

Unfortunately, none of the respondents ran their own company, which might seem to be incomprehensive, as there is a very low risk at such an early stage of their professional career. 22 persons assessed that the university’s offer is not compatible with the labor market, but 11 of them agreed that it rather is.

Most of the students of IS took part in trainings (17 indications), voluntary service (10 indications), worked in scientific groups (9 indications). Two persons indicated foreign scholarships, and none of them took part in a domestic scientific exchange program. What is more, none of the respondents from this group had ever run their own company.

The students agreed that the offer of the university is either compatible (13 indications) or not compatible (also 13 indications) with the needs of the labor market. However, most of them indicated that they do connect their professional future with the major they will graduate in (23 indications “rather yes”).

Most of the students of Economics indicated: trainings (29 indications), internships in private/state companies (23 indications), further: voluntary service (11 indications), work in scientific groups (10 indications), sports (9 indications). One person had a scholarship for a domestic scientific exchange, two – for

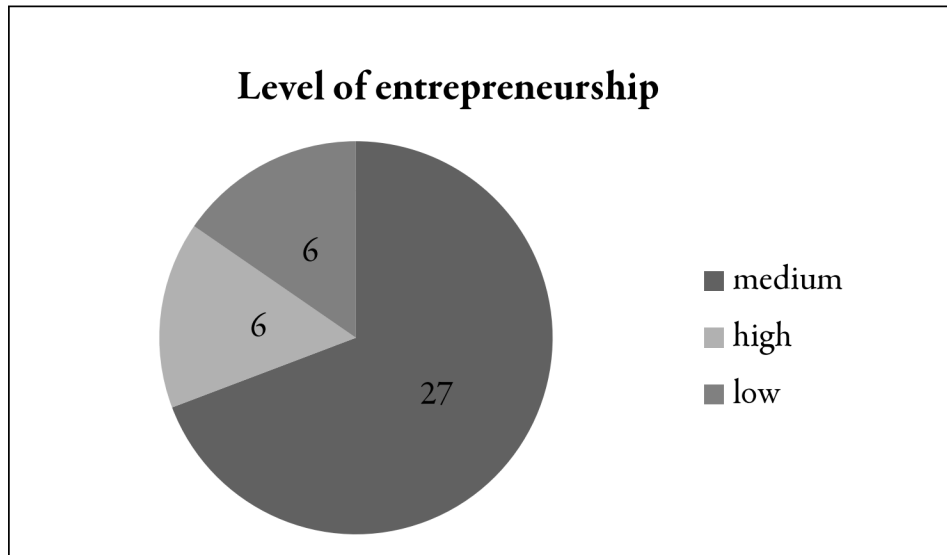
foreign ones. One person ran her/his own company. Students of Economics, as well as IS pointed out that the university's educational offer is rather compatible (26 indications) or rather incompatible (23 indications) with the requirements of the labor market.

Among students of TP the picture of the activities is as follows: trainings (5 indications), internships (4 indications), work in scientific groups (3 indications), foreign scholarships, cultural activity and sports – 2 indications for each. Most of the students thought that the offer of the university is not adjusted to the requirements of the labor market.

In the next part of the research students evaluated the characteristics that describe their entrepreneurial attitudes, that is: level of their own entrepreneurship, level of self-initiative, ability to solve problems, ability to predict the results of their actions, self-esteem. The respondents could rate these characteristics as: high, medium, low.

In most cases IR students rated themselves as “medium,” especially the level of their entrepreneurship (27 respondents, and 6 of them rated it as “low”), self-initiative (22 respondents) and self-esteem (21 respondents). The highest rate concerned the ability to solve problems (“high”: 23 respondents). These results seem to indicate that students' competences as future employees/entrepreneurs are still developing. There is a lack of self-esteem, which may not be the effect of passive behavior, but rather of the early stage of building their knowledge, skills and competences.

Figure 1. Evaluation of entrepreneurial attitudes. Students of International Relations



Source: Results of the research conducted by the authors, October-November 2013.

Likewise, IS students rated their entrepreneurial characteristics as “medium”: their level of entrepreneurship (24 indications “medium”; only 5 indications “high”), self-initiative (20 indications “medium”), as well as the ability to predict the results of their actions (20 indications “medium), or self-esteem (indications “medium”). On the contrary, they rated their abilities to solve problems as “high.”

Research among students of Economics and Technical Physics gave the same results.

The first part of the questionnaire was closed with a question about barriers that make it difficult to start and run one’s own company.

For IR students the biggest barriers were: complexity of regulations and bureaucracy (34 indications), lack of financial support (32 indications), program of studies not compatible with labor market requirements (23 indications). None of the respondents have had any experience in starting and/or running their own company. Hence the opinions about complexity of regulations and bureaucracy seem to be striking. On the one hand, it is hard not to agree with the facts (bureaucracy do not only concern enterprises), on the other hand it seems that we are confronted with a kind of a myth that functions in social-economic reality in Poland. Even for people who have not experienced this kind of

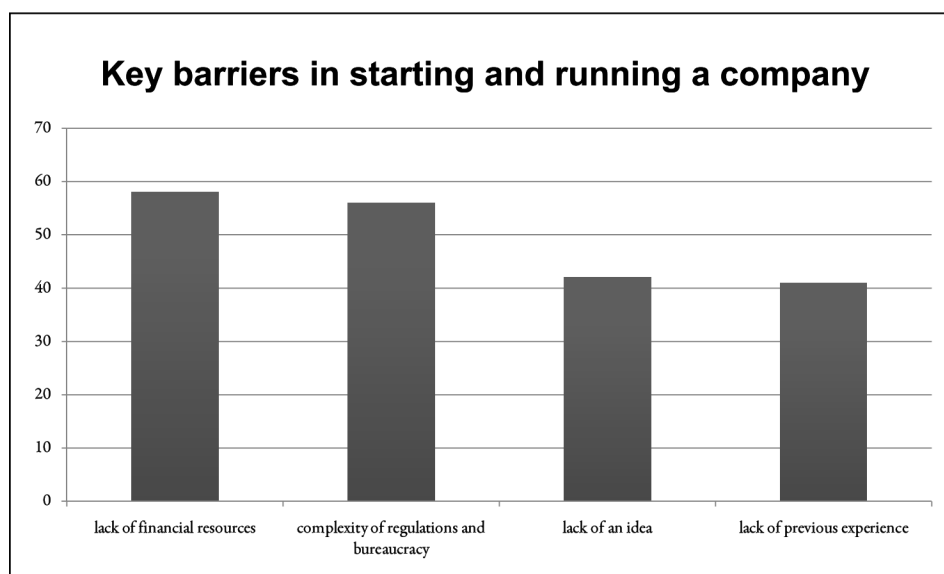
situation, this myth actually becomes fact. Such is the powerful influence of common, negative opinions and myths should already be verified during studies, as it might constitute the first, mental barrier related to the formation of entrepreneurial attitudes.

The answers of IS students were not exceptionally distinct: most of the respondents also indicated that the key barriers are: complexity of regulations and bureaucracy (26 indications), additionally lack of ideas (25 indications) and lack of financial support. Therefore, we might assume that we do not only have similar profile of students, but also a similar range of problems – in the field of regulations (or, as already described – potential “myths”), as well as in the field of financial support and in the field of shaping entrepreneurial attitudes in this kind of institutional environment for micro, small and medium enterprises in Poland.

For students of Economics the key barriers were: lack of financial resources (58 indications), complexity of regulations and bureaucracy (56 indications), lack of ideas (42 indications), lack of previous experience (41 indications).

Likewise, TP students indicated that the biggest constraints are: lack of financial resources, complexity of regulations and bureaucracy, difficulties in obtaining external financial support (9 indications, for each).

Figure 2. Key barriers in starting and running a company. Students of Economics



Source: Results of the research conducted by the authors, October-November 2013.

All these answers are similar, even though the respondents are students of different majors and faculties. This outcome allows us to formulate some general conclusions about the problems that the students from the University of Wrocław are facing in the context of entrepreneurship issues.

Part II: The activity after graduation – perspectives on the labor market

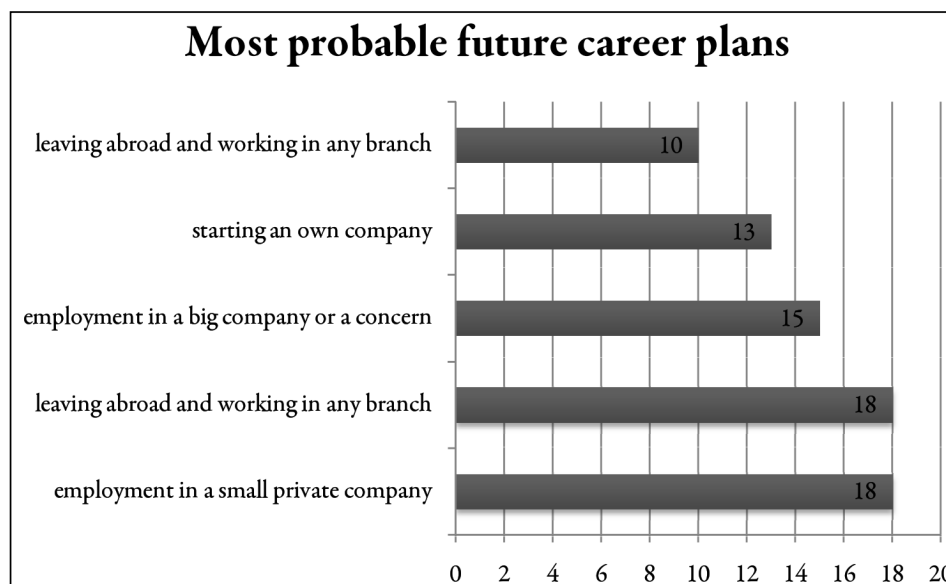
Most IR students indicated employment in a big company (25 indications) or in a small private company (19 indications) as very probable. There were only 12 indications in case of an intention to start one's own company ("very probable") and only 1 person indicated "certainly." To compare: there were 6 indications of „certainly” in the case of living abroad and working in the profession, and 2 – in the case of living abroad and working in any branch.

Therefore, it seems that the students, in their professional plans, would certainly choose living abroad, rather than starting their own business.

When asked about their professional future, IS students indicated as "very probable": employment in a small private company (18 indications), living abroad and working in any branch (18 indications), employment in a big company (15 indications), starting one's own company (13 indications, whereas there were 17 indications of "not very probable"), living abroad and working in the profession (10 indications).

Both IR and IS students pointed out that it is the idea/product, access to financial resources and contacts that decide about the success in conducting one's own company.

Figure 3. Plans after graduation. Indications of students of International Security



Source: Results of the research conducted by the authors, October-November 2013.

Most of the students of Economics plan to be employed in a small private company (39 indications “very probable”), alternatively in a big firm or company (38 indications “very probable”). The fact that as the second choice they indicated the intention to start one’s own company was comforting (31 indications for “very probable”) – even though only 2 persons indicated “certainly.” Equally positive is the fact that there were 37 indications “not very probable” in case of the choice “living abroad and working in any branch.” Students of Economics to a larger extent than students of the other two majors, connect their idea for business with their education. We might assume that these students simply have greater knowledge about running a company. Three persons among them indicated that they have a fully assessed business concept, researched market, finance and other resources. One of them already runs a company. 31 persons indicated they have a good idea and are thinking about developing it (which corresponds to the answers about career plans after graduation), 13 have an idea and a good source of financial support. As the most important in running a company students of Economics indicated: the idea/product (51 indications), diligence (31 indications), access to financial resources (27 indications) – which shows that the very idea of entrepreneurship among this group

of students is grounded in a more rational manner (the field is less abstract).

The future career plans of TP students mostly concern: employment in a big company (7 indications “very probable”), living abroad and working in the profession or living abroad and working in any branch – 6 indications “very probable” in both cases. There were 7 indications for starting one’s own company (1 indications „certainly”). Hence, it seems that despite the barriers the students are willing to start their own business. 10 out of 12 respondents would choose this option („rather yes”), when it comes to the very consideration of such an idea. On the other hand, for most of the respondents their business idea is not connected with their education (8 indications “rather not,” 1 indication “definitely not,” 1 indication “rather yes,” 1 indication “definitely yes”). This might paradoxically indicate that there is a big entrepreneurial potential among the researched students, since they would decide to start their own company even if their business idea is not based on knowledge that they obtained during their studies.

Part III: Evaluation of innovation and entrepreneurship centers – the role of the institutions of business environment

In the last part of the questionnaire the respondents indicated, what kind of support they expect from the institutions supporting entrepreneurship.

Most of the IR students as the key support indicated: accountancy and financial support (15 indications), support in obtaining subventions/subsidies for starting a business (14 indications), help in entering foreign markets (13 indications) and in applying for external resources, advertising, access to infrastructure (11 indications each).

The least meaningful was support with: general trainings in self-employment and developing entrepreneurial skills (12 indications); legal consulting (12 indications); access to infrastructure (11 indications); access to high-tech laboratories (10 indications).

In 95% cases respondents indicated that they did not have any experience in contacts with Academic Entrepreneurship Incubators (AEI) and only 10% indicated that they have benefited

from AEI trainings (50% indicated Career Office). 73% of respondents indicated that they do not know what the goals and activities of AEI are.

In the context of adjusting educational offers to labor market requirements there should be greater support for the alumni record policies. The results of the research have shown that in the opinion of the respondents their *Alma Mater* is not specifically interested in their future careers. Hence, there is no feedback of how to modify programs of the studies so that they could become more integrated with the real demand of the labor market.

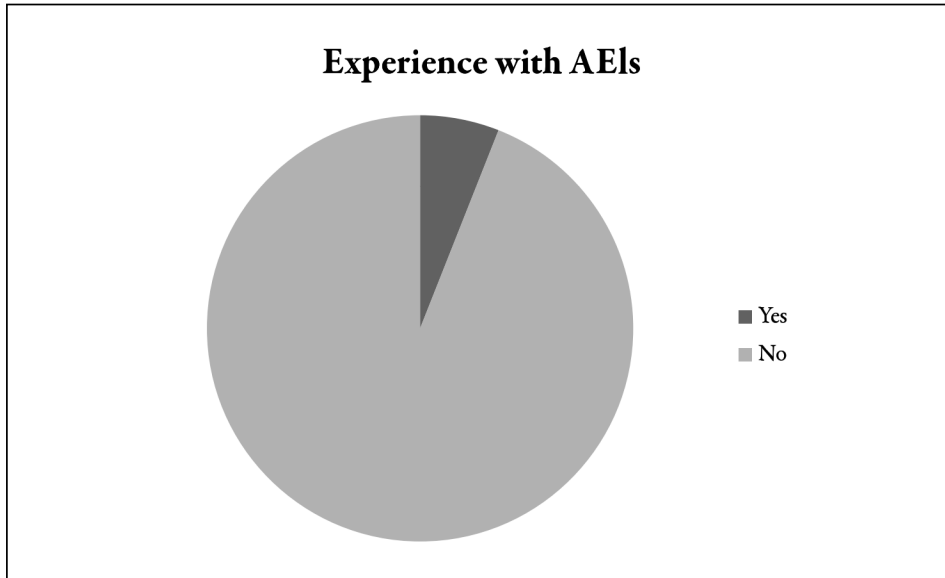
Accordingly to the answers of IS students, the key support is: legal consulting (19 indications), help in obtaining subventions/subsidies for starting a business (17 indications), applying for external resources (12 indications), accountancy and financial support (here: rather meaningful than key support), advertising (10 indications each).

Again, most of the respondents have not had any experience in contacts with the AEI, but – in contrast to IR students – many of them knew what the goal and activities of the AEI are.

For the students of Economics their key support is help in obtaining subventions/subsidies to start a business (37 indications). Moreover: accountancy and financial support, advertising (22 indications each); access to infrastructure (19 indications), help in applying for the external resources (14 indications).

Many of these respondents already knew exactly, what the goals and activities of the AEI are (23 indications “yes”). Many of them have also heard about the activities of the other AEI in Wroclaw (not only AEI at Wroclaw University). Four among them have had experience in contacts with the AEI. It is a noteworthy fact, since it is this group of students that might “naturally” be interested in starting their own company. It might be worth breaking through to these students with support that AEI has to offer, to encourage and develop the very idea of entrepreneurship.

Figure 4. Experience in contacts with Academic Entrepreneurship Incubators (AEIs). Students of Economics



Source: Results of research conducted by the authors, October-November 2013.

According to TP students the key support from the institutions includes: legal consulting (6 indications) help with entering foreign markets, as well as advertising (5 indications) as well as accountancy and financial support (4 indications each). Meaningful support would include: access to high-tech laboratories (7 indications) and help in applying for external resources (6 indications).

None of these students have ever had any experience with the AEI, and only 1 person indicated that she/he knows what their goals and activities are. Most of these respondents were not able to evaluate how accessible the information and support from AEI and Career Office are. What is more, most of this group of students does not think that their university is interested in the records of alumni in the labor market.

Summary: Conclusions and Recommendations

In the summary, the authors compiled the conclusions and recommendations based on the above research results, in a tabular manner, assigning a recommendation to each conclusion. This approach, accordingly to authors' belief, might provide more clarity of the results and a better application of this research.

Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>The research has shown that the respondents show the characteristics introduced in the Model of Entrepreneurial Event.</p>	<p>Entrepreneurial behavior depends on perceiving own abilities, will and propensity to act. Hence, it is necessary to create strategic educational programs that would support students in developing their entrepreneurial skills and provide them with adequate incentives (e.g. dedicated educational programs; developing cooperation with private companies to increase the number of internships for students; broader institutional and informational support of such entities as AEI or Career Office).</p>
<p>The level of the students' activity is significant in the field of training and internships, but distinctly low in case of domestic and foreign exchange programs (scholarships).</p>	<p>The very presentation of domestic and foreign exchange programs to the students is not enough to encourage them to take part in such programs. It is necessary to encourage students actively to make use of the presented offers (e.g. by presenting best practices by students/alumni who have taken part in such programs, during seminars, lectures, etc.).</p>
<p>Most of the respondents indicate that the educational program is not compatible with labor market requirements.</p>	<p>It is essential that the authorities preparing the educational program for students accurately and continuously verify the absorption possibilities of labor market in the context of alumni, especially of the humanities and social sciences. It is necessary to research potential employers and to develop programs that would help to record the careers of the Wroclaw University alumni.</p>
<p>The biggest barriers in starting and running one's own company, accordingly to the respondents, are: complexity of regulations, bureaucracy, lack of financial resources, ideas or experience.</p>	<p>It is recommended that there were more training offers in legal regulations concerning companies from institutions supporting entrepreneurship (AEI, Career Office). It would also be recommended to increase accessibility to free offers of legal and financial advisors (solution might be ECTS awards for the students of law that would offer such consulting to the students that are interested in starting a company). Additionally, the existence and functioning of institutions such as the AEI should be supported, as it increases chances to present good practices in starting and developing businesses. It is also essential to educate students in the field of entrepreneurship to change their perception of entrepreneurship in a positive manner.</p>

<p>Already during studies a significant number of the students plans to live abroad to look for a job (in profession or in any branch).</p>	<p>In reference to the students' activity during studies, it is again worth underlying the validity of domestic and foreign exchange programs during studies. Thanks to this students obtain chances to develop their competences, experience and what follows – employment possibilities, already before graduation. Again, it is worth mentioning how meaningful it is to adjust educational programs to labor market needs. It is recommended to bear in mind that students seem to have a relative tendency to implement less complex solutions, i.e. living abroad to work not necessarily in one's own profession.</p>
<p>Students have little information about the very existence, goals or activities of the AEI of the Wrocław universities. They rate the accessibility of the information rather low. This opinion also concerns the support of such institutions as the AEI and the Career Office of the Wrocław University.</p>	<p>It is necessary to broaden the information on possibilities that institutions such as the AEI offer, in all possible information sources (internet – including social media; posters; institutes' and faculties' home pages; direct meetings with the students, etc.).</p>
<p>Most of the respondents plan to apply for the EU financial support for the development of entrepreneurial skills or starting their own business, even if most of them do not plan this kind of career.</p>	<p>It is worth supporting students at least in the area of access to information concerning financial sources.</p>
<p>The results show that the culture of academic entrepreneurship (AE) in the humanities and social sciences does not differ to a great extent from the culture of AE in the empirical sciences.</p>	<p>It is recommended to create unified strategic solutions in the field of entrepreneurship support among students of all majors. To the students of empirical sciences it would additionally be worth broadening possibilities to use adequate space and equip laboratories to give them chances to develop their ideas on running knowledge-based companies.</p>

Source: own study.

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